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ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

VOL 29
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ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

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Edited by Stephen Wall *and* Christopher Ricks

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ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF LITERARY CRITICISM

Vol. XXIX January 1979 No. 1

F. W. Bateson, 1901—1978

A Memorial Address delivered at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, on 9 December 1978

FREDDY BATESON belonged to a generation that remembered the First World War and inherited from it a hatred of claptrap and an aversion to emotive rhetoric and effusion of any kind. It would not have pleased him to be eulogized in solemn tones: I can imagine the irreverent comments he would have made, in his hesitant, chuckling voice. Even if I could find the right words to evoke the human being whom his family and his friends now mourn, I would not have the heart to do it. Our loss is too recent. I must confine myself to saying something briefly about his work and what it seems to me that he stood for. And after all this may not be an inappropriate way to speak about someone who died at work, and whose work was his life.

The Oxford English School after the Second World War was—a little belatedly—catching up with the changes of spiritual climate and historical perspective that inevitably accompany the shift from one literary period to another. It is to F.W.B. more than anyone else that the School owed its introduction to the new currents of thought and variations of taste set in motion by the acceptance of some major twentieth-century authors as integral parts of the canon of literature. It was he who expounded and organized into a coherent intellectual structure the new ideas deriving from T. S. Eliot and those who were influenced by him in Cambridge and America and elsewhere. So much of all this has now been absorbed and taken for granted in Oxford and all other British universities that it is easy to forget how much the post-1950 treatment of the subject

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owes to him. Even if he had been no more than an effective academic middleman his claims to respect would have been considerable.

But of course he was much more than that. He was no mere purveyor of what were then fashionable novelties. His mind was essentially and radically a critical one. To the English Faculty of the 'fifties and 'sixties he must often have seemed—to use a Socratic analogy—like the gad-fly to the noble horse. The title of his last book, *Essays in Critical Dissent*, is enough to remind those who know his work that he belonged to that small and indispensable group which recurs, though too infrequently, in every age: the born heretics, the dissidents, the enemies of all establishments and entrenched interests, the people who ask why. So when undergraduates and graduates and younger tutors were treated to the provocative Batesonian critique—and it was a critique of the new ideas as well as of the old ones—they knew that what they were getting was not just valuable information, but the constant incitement to ask questions and work things out for themselves. The Oxford journal he founded, *Essays in Criticism,* which still flourishes, was conceived in that spirit.

Much has been said, and more will be said, for and against his views on literary and academic matters. What was vital was simply that he was interested in his subject and made it interesting to others. Many have been stimulated and instructed by his writings and his teaching, many have been amused, some have been nettled; but I have never heard anyone say he was bored. He could always communicate to his readers that enviably schoolboyish freshness of enjoyment which he retained to the end. Of course no one was more deeply serious about art and literature; no one could be more quietly impressive about those qualities of great poetry that command our thoughts and feelings. But, happily, he did not deny himself, or his readers, an occasional mischievous pleasure at the lapses and human frailties of eminent authors—not to speak of scholars and critics.

The English School in his day had its fair share of colourful personalities, and Freddy himself was one of the most idiosyncratic among them. But in some ways he differed

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from those larger-than-life figures who so impressed us at that time. For one thing, he was a severe, if always courteous, questioner of some aspects of the academic *status quo* which they on the whole accepted. He was not a trouble-maker or a barrack-room lawyer, but his temperament and his sense of what needed to be done made him often a voice of opposition. But the great difference between F.W.B. and some other leading figures of the School was that—if I may say this without meaning anything derogatory—they were public performers in a way in which he was not. He was at his best in personal encounters, in small groups, in vivacious effervescences in print. He was essentially a more private kind of man than some other well-known teachers have been.

His temperament, as I have said, was that of the critic; he greatly enjoyed dispute and argument. But no one who knew him would say that he was in any way a difficult or contentious human being. It is not only that in all personal dealings he was gentle and benign. He was pre-eminently a collaborative worker, a practical man and organizer, a notably efficient editor. The chief formal monument to his ability to plan and complete large-scale co-operative designs is the original *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*. But I might mention also the series of Longmans Annotated Poets, in which younger scholars were able to draw on his advice and inspiration. It is enough to say that countless people concerned with literature, professionally and unprofessionally, the old and the young, all over the world, have benefited from his kindly vigilance, his careful guidance, and his constructive help.

There are many aspects of his life and work to which it is impossible to do justice briefly. I have said nothing of his numerous extra-literary activities, in local history, in politics, in agriculture. I have said nothing of his lifelong effort, in the spirit of the Oxford English School, to which he was always loyal, to break down the barriers between 'Lit' and 'Lang'; nor of the friendly polemics with both the old-fashioned philologists and the new practitioners of Structural Linguistics into which this drew him (far from unwillingly). Nor have I tried to assess his place in cultural history, the weight and possible durability of his work in

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comparison with other famous champions of literary criticism, such as Matthew Arnold or the late F. R. Leavis, whom he respected, and therefore interrogated and disagreed with. I will only record my belief that he will be remembered as one of the noteworthy twentieth-century defenders of education, one who laboured valiantly to reconcile the need for intellectual discipline with the ideals of democracy.

He wrote on many authors, always interestingly, often illuminatingly. He had read widely in several languages, ancient and modern, including the Scandinavian (he was part Norwegian by descent). But his life study and his great love was English literature, and for him this mainly meant English poetry. He himself wrote poems, in which he took a modest pride. His taste in poetry was broad and catholic, but it had, as might be expected, a strongly individual flavour. Among the older English poets he was more and more drawn to the sanity and worldliness of Chaucer. Although he edited poems of Pope he preferred to Pope's urbanity the astringency of Swift. He wrote a much pondered and controversial book on Wordsworth, but Blake and Keats were nearer to his heart, partly perhaps because they were poets who never came to terms with respectability as Wordsworth did. Among his contemporaries he reluctantly acknowledged the supremacy of Eliot, though more as a critic than as a poet. The modern poet he liked best was Auden—the secular, rationalistic Auden of the nineteen-thirties. He was a keen playgoer, a devotee of Shakespeare, and an expert on Restoration and eighteenth-century theatre, on which he wrote one of his early books; but it was the poetic rather than the theatrical side of drama that mostly interested him. The Novel, as he would cheerfully admit, was one of his blind spots, and he wrote one of the most amusing and most penetrating attacks ever made on its defects as a literary genre. His own style of writing, elegant without affectation, colloquial without vulgarity, always with a light touch, is the best possible proof of his unerring sensitiveness to language and his literary sense.

For him great literature, and above all the tragic art of Shakespeare and the Greeks, was of supreme importance,

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the nearest thing we have in a secularised world to Scripture, the enshrinement of what humanity has found worth living and dying for. I believe his memory will always be associated with the spirit in which he thought it should be read and studied. What this was may be suggested by the words that Miles Coverdale makes the Psalmist say in the first Psalm: 'Blessed is the man that sitteth not in the seat of the scornful'. That seat was not a place in which he ever wanted to sit. As much as anyone I have ever known he believed in the necessity for intellectual conscience and the preservation of cultural standards. But he never forgot the teacher's responsibility to the weak and dull and unprivileged as well as the high-fliers. Not that he was at all soft or sentimental. He was firmly convinced that we must face things as they are, and he was fond of Wilfred Owen's saying that 'the true Poets must be truthful'. But there was another conviction, quite as deeply rooted in Freddy's nature. It is revealed in Owen's other saying, which he often quoted: 'The poetry is in the pity'. He believed that his duty to his fellow-man was to keep, as far as human imperfection allows, a rational head and a compassionate heart. He was a man of true simplicity of life and rare sweetness of character.

W. W. ROBSON

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LITERATURE AND ITS CONTEXT. *Two papers delivered at the Conference of University Teachers of English, Southampton, 1978*

I. Poems without Contexts

J. A. BURROW

I

WHEN the organisers of this conference kindly approached me for a contribution, they asked me to speak as what I am—a mediaevalist. I had first to think, therefore, what particular contribution a mediaevalist might make to the present discussions. What sort of thing does a study of mediaeval literature equip one to say about Contexts? One consideration occurred to me immediately. By comparison with their modern colleagues, mediaevalists generally know rather little about the contexts of the works they study. Even a relatively well-documented work such as Chaucer's *Troilus* suffers in this way by comparison with, say, Milton's *Paradise Lost*—not to speak of Eliot's *Four Quartets*; and we know far less, of course, about most mediaeval English poets than we do about Chaucer. Many of the surviving works, in any case, are anonymous; and we often do not know exactly when they were written, or with what purpose, or for what audience. These are the poems which I have called, in my title, 'poems without contexts'.

There is, I should confess straight away, an element of dramatic exaggeration in this title. Of course no mediaeval English poems come down to modern times entirely 'without context'. The very fact that we identify them as mediaeval and English means that we can consider them in the context of England and the Middle Ages. Those are very broad categories of time and space, certainly—England and the Middle Ages; but they do provide a rudimentary context for interpretation and understanding. They are enough to encourage some kinds of reading and to rule out others. So these poems are 'without context' only in a relative sense—relative to modern English litera-

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ture. Absolute contextlessness would be a different matter. A text absolutely without context would need, I suppose, to be written in a language no-one understood. It would also have to be found in a place which offered no clue to its provenance—under the seat, perhaps, of an international airliner at the end of a busy week. Obviously nothing in Old or Middle English lies at all near such an almost unimaginable degree zero.

Yet, if one conceives a scale running from that zero to an almost equally unimaginable maximum, one can safely say that most mediaeval poems do lie significantly lower on it than most modern ones. So it seems appropriate for a mediaevalist to approach the problem of context, as I shall, from the negative side. I have picked on a group of texts about which very little is known: the poems of Bodleian Library Manuscript Rawlinson D. 913. The question I want to consider is this: how far does our ignorance of the context of these poems impair our ability to understand them? I shall go through some of the processes of interpretation, rather slowly, for the sake of demonstration; and I shall invite you to observe what kinds of conclusion can and cannot be safely drawn in a case such as this, where there is almost no external evidence to guide us. The demonstration will have a certain theoretical interest, I hope. Also, some of the poems are very beautiful.

II

My 'poems without a context' survive only on a single strip of parchment about 4 inches wide and 11 inches long. This strip forms part of Manuscript Rawlinson D. 913 in the Bodleian Library. However, that manuscript provides no relevant context for the strip, because it is a collection of separate fragments bound together by the Bodleian Library at least a century after it received his collection in 1756. Nor is anything known about the history of the strip before Rawlinson had it in his possession. What, indeed, is it? One scholar speculated that it may have been a small roll; but Malcolm Parkes thinks it was most probably cut from a larger leaf. The palaeographers agree on only one fact: the handwriting belongs to the first half of the Fourteenth Century, perhaps somewhere near 1325.

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The contents of this unique strip are in places difficult to decipher. Clearly there are a number of distinct items, probably twelve, generally separated by spaces. Most of them are English; but there is some French. All the items are written as prose; but most of them are clearly poems. Some may be fragments. In places the writer has abbreviated his text by missing out repeats. The whole document has a casual and fugitive appearance; and it succeeded in eluding scholars (apart from the Bodley cataloguers) until as late as 1907. In that year, the German scholar W. Heuser printed its contents for the first time in the learned journal *Anglia*, under the title 'Fragments from some unknown minstrel-songs [Spielmanns liedern] of the Fourteenth Century'. Despite this rather obscure and tardy debut, some of the Rawlinson poems found their way into anthologies such as Sisam's *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose* (1921), and two in particular soon acquired a certain celebrity. Item 7, 'Icham of Irlande', as we shall see, was adapted by Yeats to form the refrain of one of his 'Words for Music Perhaps', published in *The Winding Stair* in 1933. In 1950, Edith Sitwell described Item 8, 'Maiden in the mor lay', as a 'miracle of poetry'.

I shall return later to these two mysterious and haunting poems. Let me look first at the other pieces on the strip.[1]

Three of the pieces are the merest scraps: Items 2, 3 and 4. I can make little of them. No. 3, 'Ichave a mantel ymaket of cloth', sounds like a line of verse. It is hard to imagine any prose context in which someone might have occasion to write down such a message: 'I have a mantle made of cloth'. The information content is low (many people had mantles, and most mantles were made of cloth), and that suggests the language of poetry, where redundancy has always had a special licence. Perhaps the line is the beginning of a song, jotted down as a reminder or cue by whoever compiled the collection. The same may be true of No. 2, 'The godemon on his weye', which means something like 'The master of the house on his journey'. No. 4 appears to be a rough rhyming couplet. It may be translated as follows: 'I never saw such a man as Jordan was; he went to Gogeshale without money'. 'Gogeshale' is perhaps Coggeshall in Essex, where there was an annual fair. A man who goes to a

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fair without money is either a rogue or a fool; so perhaps these lines introduced some comic or picaresque narrative. One scholar has deduced from the reference to Coggeshall that all the Rawlinson pieces come from Eastern England, and even that they were written down at the Cistercian monastery of Coggeshall; but it will be obvious that both conclusions are purely speculative.[2]

Among the other items can be distinguished three short poems quite clearly concerned, in their different ways, with sexual love. These are Items 1, 10 and 11. The simplest of them is No. 11, 'Al gold Jonet is thin her'. This poem exhibits a highly repetitive style characteristic, as we shall see, of several of the Rawlinson poems. Its kernel is formed by two simple sentences: 'Al gold Jonet is thin her' and 'Save Jankin thin onlye dere, lemman dere'. From these thirteen words the whole poem is generated. The slight semantic gap between the two kernel sentences produces a faint effect of teasing economy, as if the poem consisted of two simple yet suggestively related brush-strokes. But any reader who knows how men address beautiful women in Western literature can easily supply the missing connection: 'Your hair is all gold [and because of your beauty I love you so much that I shall die unless] you save me.' There can be no argument here about the basic message.

Yet even this very simple poem suffers somewhat, I believe, from our ignorance of its context. How sophisticated is its simplicity? That is the difficult question. A poem in which a lover pleads with a golden-haired mistress to save his life might claim to be a lyric of courtly love; but 'lemman' is not a courtly word in Middle English, and the names Jankin and Janet carry homely associations. Suppose, however, that a document turned up which proved beyond doubt that 'Al gold Jonet is thin her' was the work of Geoffrey Chaucer. We would then unhesitatingly read it as a version of the pastoral, in Chaucer's 'small-town' manner, and perhaps compare it with the love-song of Absolon in the *Miller's Tale*. We would learn to appreciate the almost Chinese delicacy with which the two kernel sentences are set in relation one to another; and we would perhaps begin to see subtlety, too, in the varied repetitions of the second sentence. Does the omission of 'thin' in the

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fourth line serve as a faint check to the lady's complacency? Is the phrase 'thin onlye dere' in the last line to be read as a claim or as a reminder?

I hope these observations do not strike you as too cynical. I do not mean to suggest that we see subtleties in texts only when we know them to be the work of persons of good education or breeding. On the other hand, it is simply naive to suppose that such considerations do not affect our judgement in these matters. Working on 'poems without contexts' makes you realise that. Whether we like it or not, interpretation does rely quite heavily upon promptings from outside the text itself.

The second poem I want to consider is Item 1, 'Of everykune tree'. Like Item 11, this poem consists of two simple kernel sentences: 'Of everykune tree the hawethorn bloweth swotest', and 'My lemman she shall be the fairest of every kinne'. In this case, the two sentences generate by repetition two parallel stanzas, rhyming a a b a / a a c a. The two unrhymed lines are linked together by the presence in them of two parallel superlatives: 'sweetest' . . . 'fairest'. The semantic gap between the two constituent sentences is considerably wider here than in the Janet poem. The first sentence states that the hawthorn bears a blossom sweeter than that of any other tree. The second expresses, apparently, a young lover's determination that his mistress will be a very beautiful woman. It is a curious fact, surely, that most readers should have no difficulty in making sense of this gross non-sequitur. They unhesitatingly assume that the unexpressed relationship between the tree and the lady is of a familiar metaphorical or symbolical kind. Furthermore, most readers would probably agree that the tree is a symbol of the woman, rather than vice-versa. The main reason for this decision is presumably the fact that poems about women are more common, in Western literature at least, than poems about trees. Western writers use nature-imagery to describe women much more often than they use woman-imagery to describe nature. Perhaps, too, the fact that the woman occupies the latter part of the poem helps to establish her primacy. If one tries the experiment of reading the stanzas in reverse order, the poem creates, I think, a rather more equivocal effect.

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In this case, then, a very general context indeed—little short of the whole Western literary tradition—seems sufficient to establish an agreed interpretation. The poem may appear enigmatic; but only a reader from Mars, or perhaps China, would misunderstand it. However, interpretations which appeal to such very general contexts are always rather vulnerable. It is an axiom of interpretation that a specific or narrow context always carries more weight than a broader one. So in cases such as the present one, a critic who suggests an interpretation which implies a more specific context will always have a certain theoretical advantage. An example of such an interpretation is provided by John Speirs. This is what Speirs says about 'Of everykune tree': 'This song, to judge from the repeated lines, was a song for several voices and the singers were dancers round a hawthorn tree (or its human impersonator, wreathed in hawthorn, perhaps in a May dance). The song may have belonged with the worship or wooing of the hawthorn tree or its spirit or its human impersonator—the fairest of earth creatures. Even if we regard the "lemmon" of the last four lines as not identical with the hawthorn tree of the first four, it would still be hard to escape the impression that this more human type of wooing-song had evolved from the earlier type and that it still shares the quality of the earlier type'.[3] Now, if the poem could indeed be shown to belong to the specific ritual context described by Speirs, then one would certainly be justified in ignoring more general considerations and reading it as a poem about a hawthorn bush. Those who continue to believe that the poem is a mere 'human type of wooing-song' will object that there is no other evidence that Englishmen worshipped, let alone wooed, bushes in the days of Edward II; but then any specific context they may themselves propose, in answer to Speirs, will itself be hypothetical. We may all know which side we would be on in such a dispute—I certainly do—but how would one *settle* it?

Item 10, 'Alnight by the rose', is even shorter than the two poems we have just discussed. It is also superficially more enigmatic, since it makes no mention of a 'lemman'. Yet nearly all readers agree that it is concerned with love, or at least with sex. They read it, that is, as an allegory. But

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how, it may be asked, can they know that it is an allegory? The answer turns out to be rather obvious. Mediaeval theorists say that texts betray their allegorical character when they do not make sense on the literal level; and this rule fits the present case. One can imagine circumstances in which a person who was afraid to steal a whole rose-bush might steal a single flower; but why should anyone spend a whole night lying by a rose-bush? No competent reader, of course, spends any time on such problems. The unlikely hypothesis that this is a poem about rose-stealing barely enters his head. He looks instantly for an allegorical interpretation, and finds one without difficulty. The rose (unlike the hawthorn tree) is a commonplace symbol of the beloved in Western literature; and the image of maidenhood as a flower survives in the English verb 'deflower'. A lover, we see, is claiming to have spent the night secretly with a woman whom he dared not carry off. The poem therefore turns out to be more witty, and perhaps more cynical, than the Janet poem or the hawthorn poem. It opens in the same ecstatically repetitive vein; but the style of the third and fourth lines is different. They are linked together, not by simple parallelism, but by paradoxical antithesis. There is chiasmus in 'the rose stele' and 'bar the flour away'; and the last line rhymes with line two to produce a compact quatrain: a b c b.

The element of wit in this poem seems to arise from the presence in it, by implication, of a third person. Nos. 1 and 11 concern only the lover and his lemman; but here there is someone else—a husband, or a father, or a duenna—who forbids the lover to steal the rose. The lover has outwitted this adversary; and his glee finds expression in sprightly word-play. The dramatic character of this poem, as one might call it, links it to two other pieces in the collection: Item 5, 'Ami tenez vous joyous', and Item 9, 'Wer ther outher in this toun'. Both these poems, like 'Alnight by the rose', involve an adversary as well as the two lovers themselves; but they are both more explicitly dramatic. Let me look first at No. 5.

'Ami tenez vous joyous' presents fewer problems than any other piece on the Rawlinson strip. Like the English poems we have been looking at, this French poem is highly repeti-

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tive; but it is repetitive in a different fashion. In 'Al gold Jonet is thin her', as we have it in Rawlinson, the repetitions and near-repetitions obey no formal principle, and therefore create a somewhat mysterious incantatory effect. In the French poem, by contrast, all the lines are repeated exactly, and in a regular way, to make up a 'chanson à danser'. This was the French equivalent of the mediaeval English carol. As usual in this type of poem, the burden or refrain is given first. It consists of a repeated couplet. There follow three regular stanzas, also in the form of repeated couplets. Each stanza is followed by the burden couplet (which should perhaps again be repeated). Thus the poem conforms exactly to the pattern of the carol. It also represents, equally clearly, the type of French lyric known as the 'chanson de mal mariée' or 'song of an unhappily married woman'. The wife addresses her absent lover ('ami'). He must keep his spirits up, she says, because her husband will die. Her husband is *lui gelous*, 'the jealous one'. She asks her lover for a 'loving look' (*douz regars*) when he returns. He must think of her in his sufferings and keep himself *gai*. She is, and always will be, his love: 'Vostre amie sui et serrai'.

The 'chanson de mal mariée' was a favourite genre of the mediaeval French *trouvère*; but it is not often found on this side of the Channel before the fifteenth century. The presence of this particular piece on the Rawlinson strip is therefore somewhat surprising. It seems to belong to a world more polite than that of the other pieces. Its basic triangular situation—a woman, a *gelous*, and an absent lover—is one which appears in many courtly French lyrics, as well as in the *Roman de la Rose*. The ideal of joy and gaiety is also courtly. So is the prizing of a 'douz regars'. Even the ruthless frankness of 'Si murra lui gelous' may be read as aristocratic: well-bred ladies do not stoop to euphemism. However, we should note that the poem is a 'chanson à *danser*'. This would mean that it was primarily intended, like the mediaeval English carol, for festive performance. A soloist would sing the stanzas, while the rest of the dancers joined in with the burden. Of such dance-songs Peter Dronke observes that 'their melodic and poetic simplicity made them intrinsically suitable for dancing and festivities irrespective of class'.[4] 'Ami tenez vous joyous' is certainly

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simple. The very high degree of repetition suggests that it was indeed sung, and perhaps danced to. If so, this would provide a link with at least some of the other items on the Rawlinson strip. We have already seen a good deal of repetition in the English poems; and at least one critic, as we have noticed, has suggested that 'Of everykune tree' is a dance-song of some sort.

Let me leave this question for a moment and turn to the other 'dramatic' love-poem, No. 9, 'Wer ther outher in this toun'. This is in every way more difficult than the French poem. The text is illegible in some places and obscure in others. The metrical form is irregular. I have divided it into four quatrains, apparently rhyming a b c b; but that leaves two lines over, which may be all that remains of a fifth quatrain. The dramatic situation is also obscure. The French poem belongs to a specific lyric type; and the situation which it portrays is completely determined by the conventions of that type. By contrast, the situation in the English poem is—or appears to be—much more singular. As it stands, indeed, the poem calls to mind one of those puzzling dramatic monologues by Browning. Sometimes Browning sets the reader to deduce a situation so peculiar that he is teased into thinking that he must have got it wrong. But a mediaeval poet, one supposes, would hardly do that. So we are left imagining that this poem is fragmentary, or else that it belongs to a lost type—neither very satisfactory solutions to an intractable problem.

The first quatrain may be translated as follows: 'If there were any ale or wine in this place, I would buy it for my mistress'. That could be the opening of a poem, certainly—indeed, a strikingly vigorous opening. But the situation is already somewhat misty, by comparison with the bright, sharp light of the French poem. One should not, I suppose, be surprised to find a lover trying to buy a drink for his lady. But the mention of ale perhaps suggests that this lover is less than a complete gentleman. You may recall the parish clerk Absolon, in Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*, who sends 'pyment, meeth and spiced ale' to the carpenter's wife. But what kind of *toun* is this, where ale and wine may not be available? Or does *toun*, as some have thought, mean 'tun, cask'? In that case, the setting is presumably a tavern.

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We read on, already puzzled, only to find that the mistress has apparently suffered some kind of violent assault. Lines 5 and 6 seem to mean: 'It was a very miserable thing for anyone to be so bold as to make my beloved all bloody'. In the following quatrain, the lover vows vengeance: 'Even though he were the son of the King of Normandy, yet I would be avenged for my mistress'. The poem has by now taken us into a very strange world indeed. A lover is apparently trying to find drink for a woman who has been assaulted by another man. The next quatrain opens with an echo of line 5: 'It was a very miserable thing for me then, miserable for me then. That is how it is for a man who loses what he loves'. The change to the past tense here coincides with a sudden change of tone. In the previous quatrain, the assault was a present subject for vengeance; but here it has dwindled into a past subject for reflection. The tone is resigned and gloomily philosophical, rather in the manner of Anglo-Saxon elegies such as the *Wanderer*. The same tone prevails in the last quatrain, or so it would seem. You will get some idea of the difficulty of reading the manuscript at this point if I tell you that Kenneth and Celia Sisam, in their *Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, start this stanza with the line 'No lore I ne lerde' ('I have not been educated'). My own text is based, after much hesitation and long staring at the parchment, on Dronke's transcription: 'That is what she taught me, and I can say no more; but to Christ I commend her who was my mistress'.[5] On this reading, the text ends with an aposiopesis. The mistress is now a thing of the past—dead, perhaps, or carried off by the brutal adversary—and the speaker 'can no more'. It does not sound as if there were any more stanzas to come.

So we are left with a very enigmatic poem of tragic love. To make matters worse, I should mention that there is no space in the manuscript separating what I have distinguished as No. 9 from the equally enigmatic No. 8, 'Maiden in the mor lay'. The one runs straight on from the other—unlike all the other pieces, which are separated by spaces. There is also one curious verbal link between the two poems (if such they be). Compare lines 11 and 12 of No. 9, 'Well wo was me tho, / Wo was me tho', with lines 8 and

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9 of No. 8, 'Well was hire mete, / What was hire mete?' Certainly it is hard to read the two poems as one, and the editors are probably right to separate them; but a lingering doubt remains. The problem would be easier if one could see in the lines beginning 'Wer ther outher in this toun' a poem of some recognisable type. R. H. Robbins entitled the piece 'A Toast to His Lost Mistress' and suggested that it might be a drinking song. My colleague Basil Cottle sees the poem as deliberately 'choaked and incoherent', supposing it to represent the monologue of a deserted drunk.[6] The latter conjecture seems to me distinctly better than the former; but both rest on slender evidence. Both Robbins and Cottle read line 16 as 'Ne—no more in can!', i.e. 'nothing left in the mug!' That certainly would suggest either a drinking song or a drinker's monologue. But Dronke's reading, though it involves a small emendation, is more likely; and if one adopts it, as I have done, the poem is left with only a single reference to drink, at the opening.

However, there is another piece in the Rawlinson collection which certainly does concern drinking. This is the extraordinary item No. 12. This appears at the bottom of the verso side of the strip, and it is hard to make out, especially in its opening lines. My reconstruction, which is very hypothetical, displays two closely parallel stanzas (lines 1–5 and lines 10–14) but leaves six lines formally unaccounted for. It is clear, however, that the poem represents, in part at least, the words of a drinker to his companions. The repetitive manner so characteristic of the Rawlinson poems here creates an effect of tipsy and slightly incoherent excitement. This kind of mimesis is definitely not a feature of drinking songs. Hence R. H. Robbins concludes that the poem 'is not a song to be sung on festive occasions . . . but a very clever literary production describing how a man feels and reacts when drunk'.[7] But this conclusion takes insufficient account, I think, of the latter part of the poem, beginning 'Stondeth alle stille'. This hardly makes sense as part of a purely literary production. Robbins says that the poet 'is trying to represent the emotions of a drunken man, who wants everything to stand still; then, when he trips, is able to relax his body'.[8] But surely the three imperatives *stondeth*, *trippe* and *let gon*

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must all have the same reference. To me they sound most like instructions to dancers, built into the text of a dance song. A modern analogy is the Hokey-Cokey, where the dancers sing 'You put your right leg in, You put your right leg out', and so on. I suspect, therefore, that the whole poem may be the text, not of a drinking song, but of a dance song. Perhaps the dance itself involved some imitation of drunken behaviour. Possibly the dancers stood and stamped during the heavy, repetitive parts of the song: 'Tabart is ydronken', 'Stondeth alle stille'. At other times they may have skipped and 'let their bodies go'—dancing in a ring, perhaps, round a leader who impersonated the drunken Tabart.

This is, of course, speculation; but I hope you will agree that it is not idle speculation. To argue whether this poem is a literary piece of dramatic monologue or a fragment of dance song is to argue about the very meaning of the poem. One cannot avoid such conjectures, however resolutely one sets one's face against mere scholarly speculation. Those who insist on sticking to the 'words on the page' simply drive the business of conjecture underground. For one cannot interpret or evaluate a text without identifying what *kind* of text it is. In some cases that identification is so easily made that we do not notice ourselves making it; but there is no difference in principle between these easy cases and difficult ones like 'Tabart is ydronken'.

These considerations apply with particular force, I think, to the two best-known Rawlinson poems, 'Icham of Irlande' and 'Maiden in the mor lay'; but before discussing these, let me deal briefly with the one other remaining piece, No. 6, 'Ore alom, alom'. Like the other French poem, this one appears to be a 'chanson à danser'; but in this case the refrain or burden is followed by only one stanza, so perhaps the poem is fragmentary. On the other hand, the fundamentally dance-like character of the 'carol' is more evident here. The repeated 'alom, alom, alom' appears to correspond, like 'Trippe a littel with thy fot' in No. 12, to what dancers actually did as they sang. In his standard work, *The Early English Carols*, R. L. Greene describes the typical performance of a carol as follows: the leader would 'sing the stanzas of the song to which the carole was being danced.

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During the time of such singing the ring moved to the left. At the close of the stanza the entire company of dancers would respond with the refrain or burden of the song, dancing in place the while. Then, as the circle revolved again, the leader would sing the following stanza . . .'[9] It is easy, in this case, to imagine the dancers stamping as they chorus 'Ore alom, alom, alom', expressing an impatience which gives way to relief as the leader sings 'Ore est temps d'alier a diner' and the ring revolves.

The content of this poem presents no difficulties. It is plainly a song of 'pastime and good company', such as might be sung and danced just before dinner on some festive occasion. We may notice here the curious fact that neither of the French pieces in Rawlinson presents any problems of interpretation. They are both equally lucid and orderly—quite without the turbid passages and occasional glimpses of deep water which we find in the English poems. The contrast is not uncharacteristic of the literary cultures of English and French in the Middle Ages.

This contrast appears most strikingly when we turn from No. 6 to No. 7, 'Icham of Irlande'. Like No. 6, this famous piece appears to be a carol, or a fragment of one. There is a three-line burden, followed by a single stanza, the last line of which (as often in carols) serves as a transition back to the burden—which is presumably to be repeated. The invitation to 'come ant daunce with me' leaves little doubt that this carol really was meant to be danced. If the dance followed the pattern described by Greene, the stanza would have been sung by a soloist, the burden by the rest of the company; but the poem makes no dramatic use of this distinction of persons. The Irish speaker in the burden seems to be the same as the (presumably female) speaker in the stanza who invites a gentleman to dance with her in Ireland. Since this speaker would inevitably be identified with the soloist (herself presumably female), we must imagine that the other dancers are, as it were, echoing her words in their burden. Perhaps the dance took the form of a Ladies' Excuse Me, with the soloist singling out whichever man stopped opposite her, when the ring of carollers had finished dancing round as she sang her stanza. In that case, she may have repeated the same

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stanza at each invitation. Otherwise, the text must be fragmentary.

However, such a reconstruction of the dance, even if it were generally agreed, would not in this case lead to a complete interpretation. In Nos. 6 and 12, the dancers impersonate revellers and drunks, respectively. In No. 5, the soloist impersonates a 'mal mariée'. Those are familiar human types, with no mystery about them. But who or what, in the present poem, does the soloist impersonate? Who is this Irish woman (if she is a woman) who prays the men to come and dance with her in Ireland?

One answer to this difficult question has been given by John Speirs: 'Ireland, the Isle of Saints because earlier it had been the Isle of the Gods, is here sacred still perhaps in a pagan as well as a Christian sense. The dancer from across the sea—from a sacred or magical *other* country—is still perhaps essentially a faery or otherworld visitant. . . . Essentially, or symbolically, the dancer will steal away or abduct her partner'.[10] Now Speirs may be right in suggesting that we have here, as perhaps in the case of the Holy Grail, a fragment out of pagan antiquity. If so, however, the original pagan form and meaning are beyond the range of conjecture. In any case, such conjecture would be relevant to the interpretation of the Fourteenth-Century poem only insofar as that poem itself has ancient or pagan meanings. On this crucial point, Speirs is somewhat evasive: 'sacred *still perhaps* in a pagan sense . . . *still perhaps essentially* a faery'.

I would prefer to approach the problem from a different angle altogether, and speculate rather on what the poem meant to the dancers. It may have been enough for them to identify 'Ireland', in the make-believe geography of the dance floor, with the area occupied by the soloist at the centre of the ring of carollers. The symbolism of dance would then quite naturally explain why this area represented a 'holy land' ('Weave a circle round him thrice'). It would also, perhaps, justify to the dancers the strange, pleading insistence of the woman's cry:

> Gode sire, pray ich thee
> For of sainte charite
> Come ant daunce with me
> In Irlande.

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These are, of course, themselves conjectures; but they may at least suggest the peculiar nature of the problem presented by 'Icham of Irlande'. In the case of the other ten pieces I have so far discussed, problems seem to stem from our ignorance of the original, Fourteenth-Century context. If only we could talk to the scribe or his friends, we may imagine, we would find out what we want to know—about the man who went to Coggeshall without money, for instance, or about the bloodstained mistress. But the scribe may not have understood any better than we do who the Irish dancer 'really was'. He would, perhaps, have understood the poem only insofar as it referred to the actions and symbolic geography of the dance. How many people nowadays could explain the unseasonable nuts in 'Here we go gathering nuts in May'?

I cannot leave this poem without referring briefly to Yeats. Yeats runs burden and stanza together, alters the wording slightly, substitutes a line of his own for line 4, and so produces a five-line burden for his own carol:

> 'I am of Ireland,
> And the Holy Land of Ireland,
> And time runs on,' cried she.
> 'Come out of charity,
> Come dance with me in Ireland'.

In his two stanzas, Yeats portrays 'one solitary man' who hears this call, but refuses it. As Ellmann says, he 'finds many pretexts for preferring comfortable expedience to the discomforts of idealism'; but at the end the woman is still singing 'as if indifferent to his prudential explanations'.[11] In the context of Yeats's poem, the mystery of the Irish woman is partly dissipated. Her words are to be understood, as Ellmann says, as 'the cry of all idealism and heroism'—but also, surely, as the cry of Ireland. Yeats has reset the Middle English poem in the world of contemporary politics. Yet even so, the poem retains something of what Speirs rightly calls its 'trance-like or rapt' quality.

It is time to turn, however, to the last of the Rawlinson 'Words for Music Perhaps': No. 8, 'Maiden in the mor lay'. Once the much-abbreviated text of the manuscript is expanded by necessary repeats, this proves to be the longest

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piece in the collection; but its four seven-line stanzas are so repetitious that the prose sense can be summed up in a single sentence: A maiden spent seven nights and a day in the wilds, eating primroses and violets, drinking cold spring-water, and sheltering in a chamber of red roses and lilies. The utterance is very simple, but also very strange; and it has attracted much more attention from interpreters than any other piece in the collection. Let me summarise briefly some of their conclusions.

A number of critics interpret the poem in terms of Christian tradition. Some have seen the maiden as an ascetic or penitent (perhaps Mary Magdalen?) who has given up the comforts of civilisation for the sake of her soul.[12] Others interpret her allegorically. Thus D. W. Robertson, in an essay on 'Historical Criticism' published in 1951, identified her as the Virgin Mary. Robertson suggested, among other things, that the roses allegorically represent marytrdom or charity, and that the lilies represent purity. The spring-water is God's grace. The maiden is the Virgin, awaiting the coming of Christ (the 'day' of line 7) in the 'wilderness of the world under the old law' (the 'moor').[13]

Several scholars have questioned this interpretation, among them E. T. Donaldson. Donaldson admits that mediaeval readers may have 'thought of the Virgin' as they read the poem; but he maintains that it makes sense without allegorical interpretation. He compares the maiden to Wordsworth's Lucy: 'In each case the poetic *donnée* is the highly primitive one which exposes an innocent woman to the vast, potentially hostile, presumably impersonal forces of nature; and the Middle English lyric suggests the mystery by which these forces are, at times, transmuted into something more humane, even benevolent, by their guardianship of the innocent maiden'.[14] Others have looked for a more definite secular interpretation, and have found it in the counter-cultures of folk-belief. The maiden, they suggest, may be 'undergoing some rite of initiation or purification', or else she is under a spell. Or she may be a fairy creature. Thus Dronke, taking a hint from Speirs, presents an elaborate reading of the poem as a dance song celebrating a water-sprite who dwells by a spring on the moors.[15]

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Anyone who reads these discussions of 'Maiden in the mor lay' will be left with a strong sense of how hard it is to establish any interpretation of such an enigmatic poem in the absence of an agreed context. We seem to be trapped in what is known as the 'hermeneutic circle'. E. D. Hirsch explains the idea of this circle as follows: 'The whole can be understood only through its parts, but the parts can be understood only through the whole'.[16] So, in this case, it seems that we cannot determine the meaning of parts such as the rose or spring without first knowing what kind of piece the poem is. On the other hand, we cannot determine what kind of piece the poem is without first knowing what at least some of its parts signify.

One possible way of escaping from this circle suggests itself at once. Can we not take the other Rawlinson pieces as themselves providing the necessary context within which to consider this particularly difficult case? For the Rawlinson collection is itself, we might argue, a 'whole' some of whose parts *can* be known. It contains, as we have seen, five poems concerned in various ways with love between the sexes: Nos. 1, 5, 9, 10, and 11. We have also identified No. 6 as a festive song, and No. 12 as a poem about drunkenness. Three of the pieces, we may add, are in the form of the 'chanson à danser' or carol and may themselves be dance songs: Nos. 5, 6, and 7. No. 12 appears to be another dance song. Nos. 1, 10 and 11 are also 'words for music perhaps'. The general character of the collection, therefore, seems to be secular, even popular, with a predominance of song-like or danceable pieces mostly concerned with food or drink or love.

It does not follow from this, however, that *all* the Rawlinson pieces must be secular or worldly. The matter might be settled if we knew who wrote the strip and why; but we do not. Some scholars have supposed that the scribe was a minstrel noting down items from his repertoire. But this is no more than a bare hypothesis; and in any case, a minstrel might well have a song of the Virgin among his miscellaneous party-pieces. It is certainly true to say that 'Maiden in the mor lay' *sounds* as if it were the same sort of poem as the other Rawlinson pieces. Its highly repetitive, song-like manner, for example, resembles that of Nos.

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1, 10, 11 and 12. But similarity of manner does not exclude difference of meaning. I would conclude, therefore, that consideration of the Rawlinson collection as a whole does not offer a sure way out of the hermeneutic circle, though it does lend some circumstantial support to secular interpretations of 'Maiden in the mor lay'. So far as this argument is concerned, Robertson is more likely to be wrong than right; but one can say no more than that.

However, since 1951, when Robertson published his interpretation, two fresh pieces of evidence have most unexpectedly come to light. These are the only two known mediaeval references to the Rawlinson poems; and both of them, as it happens, concern 'Maiden in the mor lay'. The first, published by R. L. Greene in 1952 in *Speculum* (xxvii 504–6), occurs in an Irish manuscript known as the Red Book of Ossory. The last pages of this volume contain the text of sixty Latin poems, written in Fourteenth-Century hands. On the first page of this section of the manuscript is the following note: 'Be advised, reader, that the Bishop of Ossory has made these songs for the vicars of the cathedral church, for the priests, and for his clerks, to be sung on important holidays and at celebrations, in order that their throats and mouths, consecrated to God, may not be polluted by songs that are lewd, secular, and associated with revelry. Furthermore, since they are trained singers, let them provide themselves with suitable tunes according to what the texts require'. The bishop in question was an English Franciscan Friar, Richard de Ledrede, Bishop of Ossory from 1317 till 1360. Now, a number of his Latin lyrics have prefixed to them scraps of English or French verse. These scraps evidently indicate the 'suitable tunes' to which the pious Latin was designed to be sung. One of the Latin poems, a song of the Nativity, has at its head the words: 'Mayde y[n] the moore [l]ay'. Evidently Ledrede intended his Ossory clergy to sing this particular piece to the tune of our Rawlinson poem.

The second new piece of evidence was published much more recently, by Professor Wenzel in the 1974 issue of *Speculum* (xlix 69–74). It was discovered by Wenzel in a Latin sermon collection written down about 1360 in a manuscript in Worcester Cathedral Library. The preacher

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is lamenting the moral deterioration of man. In the Golden Age, he says, citing the familiar authorities of Ovid and Boethius, men lived in joy and innocence. They ate only the foods that nature provided. And what, he asks, did they drink? His answer is unexpected. I quote: 'And what was their drink? The answer appears in a certain song [*in quodam cantico*], namely a *karole* that is called "the mayde be wode lay". Note in margin: "the cold water of the well spryng" '.

These two remarkable allusions throw some light, I think, on the Rawlinson poem. First, they confirm the suspicion that 'Maiden in the mor lay' is a song or 'canticum'—evidently a popular one, for its tune was known even in far-off Kilkenny. Second, we note that the Worcester preacher seems to be making no more than a graceful that he regarded it as a song for dancing. Third, and most important, we find clues to the meaning of the poem. The Worcester allusion may seem to prompt an interpretation quite different from any that has previously been proposed. Is 'Maiden in the mor lay' a lyric about the Golden Age? I do not think we can draw that conclusion. The Worcester preacher seems to be making no more than a graceful literary allusion, prompted by his own rhetorical question, 'And what was their drink?' The question reminds him of the song, and the song provides a felicitously appropriate answer.

More significant, I think, is the Ossory allusion. The Bishop, it will be recalled, intended his pious Latin pieces to replace 'songs that are lewd, secular, and associated with revelry'. It has been argued that the accompanying scraps of English and French do no more than suggest suitable tunes. They do not necessarily, on this argument, indicate the particular lewd songs which the Bishop intended to supplant. If that is so, then of course 'Maiden in the mor lay' might still be a Marian lyric. But this rather strained argument gains no support from the other vernacular Ossory scraps. There are eight of these, and all of them seem to indicate popular secular songs, mostly love-songs.[17] The longest scrap, for instance, represents the opening of a rare English 'chanson de mal mariée'. Another reads simply: 'Have god day, my lemmon'. In short, 'Maiden in

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the mor lay' keeps much the same sort of company in the Red Book of Ossory as it does in the Rawlinson Manuscript. We are surely safe in assuming that Bishop Ledrede did indeed regard it as one of those 'cantilenae teatrales, turpes et seculares' which he so much deplored. He may have been wrong, of course; but then so may Professor Robertson. And who is more likely to be wrong: a Fourteenth-Century bishop or a Twentieth-Century professor?

I conclude, then, that the Ossory allusion offers us a possible way of escape from the hermeneutic circle in the case of 'Maiden in the mor lay'. It discourages, if it does not absolutely rule out, interpretations which see the maiden as Mary Magdalen or the Virgin Mary. On the other hand, it does not help us to select the right secular interpretation; and I doubt whether we shall ever be quite sure of that, unless yet another allusion turns up, perhaps. One suspects, as in the case of 'Icham of Irlande', that the singers of the *karole* may themselves not have known the significance of their mysterious damsel who lay in the moor—or, in the Worcester variant, 'by wood'. Originally, perhaps, she *was* a water-sprite; but for the carollers she may well have been, as she is for us, a creature of mystery.

III

This discussion of the twelve Rawlinson pieces has ended on an inconclusive note; but I do not apologise for that. My purpose, you will recall, was to display what kinds of difficulties arise in the interpretation of 'poems without contexts'. I therefore do not have to claim to have solved all problems presented by these poems. Indeed, I have suggested that some of them hardly *can* be solved, in the absence of further external evidence.

In his masterly book entitled *Validity in Interpretation*, E. D. Hirsch refers to the famous experiments reported by I. A. Richards in his *Practical Criticism*. The Cambridge undergraduates, you may recall, were presented with the text of certain poems, without title or attribution, and failed rather dismally to understand them. Richards thought, no doubt correctly, that this failure reflected on their education; but Hirsch thinks it has a more general significance as well. All interpretation, Hirsch argues,

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depends upon an ability to guess what *type of meaning* is being expressed; and our ability to guess this correctly is much impaired when we have no external evidence to guide us. Our sense of what to look for in a text, in other words, depends more than we may like to admit upon being given an external context. Texts do not have 'semantic autonomy'. Indeed, one and the same text may support two radically different interpretations, if we have occasion to read it in more than one context and hence look for and see different things. The story by Borges entitled 'The Man Who Wrote *Don Quixote*' is based on this curious fact.

I said earlier that Item No. 11, 'Al gold Jonet is thin her', would read differently if we were to discover that Chaucer wrote it. We would take it, then, as an exercise in a sophisticated pastoral manner. In fact, however, the general character of the Rawlinson collection, so far as that can be determined, does not support such an interpretation. The poems seem generally to belong rather to some world of popular song and dance than to the courtly literary world of Chaucer. But such a conclusion, even if it were universally accepted, would by no means end the matter. A phrase such as 'a world of popular song and dance' is easily spoken; but what kinds of guess about meaning does it encourage, and what kinds does it exclude? What, indeed, does 'popular' mean in this context? We may recall that at least one of the Rawlinson poems was 'popular' with vicars, priests and clerks in the diocese of Ossory. What does *that* imply?

The truth is that our knowledge of the social and human context of the Rawlinson pieces is too uncertain and indefinite to help us much with their interpretation. It is enough to rule out the more abtruse patristic readings of 'Maiden in the mor lay', no doubt; but that is almost all.

So how *do* we decide what 'type of meanings' to look for in these poems? The full answer to this question is no doubt very complicated; but one point emerges clearly. We rely heavily upon our ability to identify positively from internal evidence the literary genre to which each poem belongs. Thus, No. 5 presented no difficulty, because it recognizably belonged to a well-known mediaeval genre: the 'chanson de mal mariée'. This genre is so specific in its

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conventions that it determines, not just the situation of the unhappily married woman, but also even the choice of individual words to express it. *Lui gelous*, in this kind of text, can only mean 'the husband'. So once the genre of this particular piece had been identified, everything else became clear. The work of interpretation was performed at a stroke.

Not all genres, of course, are as specific as the 'chanson de mal mariée'. One does not arrive at a complete interpretation of 'Icham of Irlande' simply by identifying it as a dance song. That identification helps insofar as it enables one to subsume the poem's meanings into a reconstructed dance. But the reconstruction leaves a residue of obscurity: Who, after all, *was* the Irish dancer? In the case of 'Maiden in the mor', identification of the poem as a dance song or *karole* is less helpful. The meanings of this poem cannot easily be subsumed into the dance genre. Yet even here the interpreter enjoys some advantage, in being able to tell at least what type of poem he is dealing with. One way of feeling that advantage is to compare 'Maiden in the mor lay' with No. 9, 'Wer ther outher in this toun'. I called the latter a 'dramatic monologue'; but that convenient phrase will not have concealed from you the fact that I was unable to make any coherent sense of the piece. I did not really know what kind of poem it was.

In conclusion, let me sum up this general point as simply as I can. In interpreting any text, we need to be able to guess what kinds of meaning to look for in it. These guesses are usually guided, to some considerable extent, by our knowledge of the 'external context'—the title of the text, who wrote it, when, for what occasion, for what audience, etc. But we can do without such knowledge under certain circumstances. The text must clearly declare itself as belonging to a known genre or type; and that genre must be such as to determine certain specific types of meaning. Otherwise, in the absence of external evidence, we are in most cases condemned to conjecture and controversy. Another way of saying the same thing is to describe genre as an internal substitute for context.

University of Bristol

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NOTES

[1]A text of all the poems, based on a fresh look at the manuscript, was distributed at the Conference and is appended below. This is a working text, normalised in spelling and presented (as far as possible) in coherent and continuous form. Major expansions are indicated by square brackets. Minor conjectures and emendations are left unmarked.

[2]R. L. Greene (ed.), *The Lyrics of the Red Book of Ossory*, Medium Aevum Monographs, New Series V (Oxford, 1974), pp. ix–x. I am indebted to Norman Davis for a new reading of this item in the Rawlinson MS.

[3]J. Speirs, *Medieval English Poetry: The Non-Chaucerian Tradition* (London, 1957), pp. 61–2.

[4]P. Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric* (London, 1968), p. 189.

[5]P. Dronke, 'The Rawlinson Lyrics', *N & Q* n.s. 8 (1961), pp. 245–6.

[6]R. H. Robbins (ed.) *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (Oxford, 1952), pp. 7 and 230–1; A. B. Cottle, *The Triumph of English 1350–1400* (London, 1969), p. 297.

[7]Ed. cit., pp. 230–1.

[8]Ed. cit., p. 265.

[9]R. L. Greene, *The Early English Carols* (Oxford, 1977), pp. xlv–xlvi.

[10]Op. cit., p. 60.

[11]R. Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats* (London, 1954), pp. 280–1.

[12]E. M. W. Tillyard, *T.L.S.*, May 11 1951, p. 293; J. Harris, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 1 (1971), pp. 59–87.

[13]D. W. Robertson, 'Historical Criticism', *English Institute Essays 1950*, ed. A. S. Downer (New York, 1951), p. 27.

[14]E. T. Donaldson, 'Patristic Exegesis in the Criticism of Medieval Literature—The Opposition', in *Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature*, ed. D. Bethurum (New York, 1960), p. 23.

[15]*The Medieval Lyric*, pp. 195–6.

[16]E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, 1967), p. 76. See also discussion in Hirsch's later book, *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago, 1976).

[17]Greene, *The Lyrics of the Red Book*, Nos. 8 (also 19 and 28), 17, 18, 22 (also 34), 24, 30, 40, 41.

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Appendix

THE POEMS OF BODLEIAN MS. RAWLINSON D. 913

1. Of everykune tree,
Of everykune tree,
The hawethorn bloweth swotest,
Of everykune tree.

My lemman she shal be,
My lemman she shal be,
The fairest of every kinne
My lemman she shal be.

2. The godemon on his weye.

3. Ichave a mantel ymaket of cloth.

4. Ne sey never such a man as Jordan was; wente he to Gogeshale panyles.

5. Ami tenez vous joyous,
Si murra lui gelous.
Ami tenez vous joyous,
Si murra lui gelous.

Ami, quant vous turneiez,
Un douz regars moi donez.
Ami, quant vous turneiez,
Un douz regars moi donez.
Ami tenez vous joyous,
Si murra lui gelous.

Ami, quant vous soufrerez,
De vostre amie pencerez.
[Ami, quant vous soufrerez,
De vostre amie pencerez.]
Ami tenez vous joyous,
Si murra lui gelous.

Ami si vous tenez gai,
Vostre amie sui et serrai.
[Ami si vous tenez gai,
Vostre amie sui et serrai.]
Ami tenez vous joyous,
Si murra lui gelous.

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6. Ore alom, alom, alom,
Bele companie avom.
Ore alom, alom, alom,
Bele companie avom.

Ore est temps d'alier a diner,
Ore est temps d'alier a diner.
Ore alom, alom, alom,
Bele companie avom.

7. Icham of Irlande
Ant of the holy lande
Of Irlande.

Gode sire, pray ich thee
For of sainte charite
Come ant daunce with me
In Irlande.

8. Maiden in the mor lay,
In the mor lay,
Sevenight fulle [ant a —]
Sevenight fulle [ant a —]
Maiden in the mor lay,
In the mor lay,
Sevenightes fulle ant a day.

Well was hire mete,
What was hire mete?
The primerole ant the—
The primerole ant the—
Well was hire mete,
What was hire mete?
The primerole ant the violet.

Well [was hire dring,]
What was hire dring?
[The chelde water of the—
The chelde water of the—
Well was hire dring,
What was hire dring?]
The chelde water of the welle spring.

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Well was hire bour,
What was hire bour?
[The rede rose an te—
The rede rose an te—
Well was hire bour,
What was hire bour?]
The rede rose an te lilie flour.

9. Wer ther outher in this toun
Ale or wyn,
Ich hit wolde bugge
To lemman myn.

Well wo was so hardy
Forte make my lef al blody.

Though he were the kinges sone
Of Normaundy,
Yet icholde awreke be
For lemman myn.

Well wo was me tho,
Wo was me tho;
The man that leseth that he loveth
Him is al so.

So she me lerde—
Ne no more I ne can,
But Crist ich hire biteche
That was my lemman.

10. Alnight by the rose, rose,
Alnight by the rose I lay.
Darst ich nought the rose stele,
Ant yet I bar the flour away.

11. Al gold Jonet is thin her,
Al gold Jonet is thin her.
Save thin Jankin, lemman dere,
Save Jankin, lemman dere,
Save thin onlye dere.

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12. [Tabart is] ydronken,
Dronken, dronken,
Ydronken is Tabart,
Ydronken is Tabart,
[Ydronken] atte wine.

Hay [ ] Malkin,
Suster, Walter, Peter!
Ye dronke al depe
Ant ichulle eke.

Stondeth alle stille,
Stille, stille,
Stille stondeth alle,
Stille [stondeth alle,]
Stille as any ston.

Trippe a littel with thy fot
Ant let thy body gon.

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LITERATURE AND ITS CONTEXT

II. Scholarship as Humanism

HOWARD ERSKINE-HILL

IN PART III of his *Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* Burckhardt recounts how Ciriaco of Ancona (d. 1457) 'travelled not only through Italy, but through other countries of the old Orbis terrarum, and brought back countless inscriptions and sketches. When asked why he took all this trouble, he replied, "To wake the dead" '. Petrarch, R. R. Bolgar tells us in *The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries* (1954), was unfortunate in his attempt to learn Greek: 'He started on his own, procured a Homer, and being desirous to read it, persuaded an itinerant Byzantine to give him lessons . . . His choice of a teacher was unlucky . . . Petrarch's learning of Greek was an unfulfilled hope. But so vigorous was his praise of the Greek writers whose work he could not read . . . that half a century later the Florentines were prepared to invite a Byzantine scholar to lecture in their city' (p. 260). Ancient texts, Walter Ullmann concludes in the Epilogue of his book, *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism* (1977), were studied as 'mirrors of ancient societies, of purely human complexion, from which essential and fruitful lessons could be drawn . . . Humanity as such was studied in them. The civic conduct of man was observed in them . . . They were the educational means of Renaissance humanism . . .' (p. 200 and see pp. 172–3).

I offer these instances to suggest a meaning of the word 'humanism' relevant to the state of criticism at the present time. Whenever, in my amateur way, I plunge into the immense and complicated debate concerning the nature of Renaissance Humanism I am struck by one thing: the reclamation in the West of the largely lost language of Greek, and from that the gradual penetration of the relatively alien culture, social, political, religious, literary, which the language conveyed. I am struck, in the instances given, by the readiness of the humanists to project their minds beyond their own culture, to apprehend before they could

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comprehend, and so discover a knowable world whose very difference from their own was a great part of its contribution to their lives. One is impressed by the way in which they had before them a procedure of practical study (the discovery and analysis of evidence) which amounted to the defiance of time—' "To wake the dead" '—in the service of present and future. The high tide of this humanist endeavour was full and round earth's shore, no doubt, in the nineteenth century, but today, when in secondary and higher education the study of the ancient world is in steep decline, I want to suggest that the instances I have cited offer us paradigms of what scholarly criticism of our own literature should be trying to do. The suggestion can perhaps be sharpened by quoting the well-known humanistic sentence from Terence's *Self-Tormenter* (III. 1): 'Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto'. How often is the context of this remembered—in which Chremes speaks these words to a surly though in fact grief-stricken old man, whose inexplicable behaviour has aroused Chremes's curiosity, and who has just told him to mind his own business? It is Chremes's refusal to confine his mind to his own personal concerns, his active and persistent enquiry, which turns the surly old man into a sympathetic human being. Difference of experience through active investigation points to a shared interest.

If all this seems pretty straightforward I am glad, since that shows that the foundations of our discipline still stand firm. Yet sometimes pieces of academic journalism make me uneasy. Five years ago John Holloway published in the *Times Higher Educational Supplement* an article called 'A Syllabus for Neither Scholars Nor Critics' (8.6.73, p. 13) in which he said, amidst much careful qualification: 'If Shakespeare is found too remote for the essential spark to cross the gap, even he must go. Something from some period remote in time seems to me essential; but I would sooner see a gulf yawning from Langland's Lady Mede to Dickens's Lady Dedlock, than a spineless cover-the-ground come what may'. I'm not sure that I would—but of course the question is begged. Spinelessly covering the ground (if such a thing is possible) is not what is advocated by those who would defend an education in English literature from the Anglo-

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Saxons, or from Chaucer, to our own time. Note also how this extract assumes the passiveness of the reader. If the spark doesn't come across there's nothing more to be done. This is like Chremes turning away from the old man because of his initially uninviting behaviour.[1] A more recent article in the same weekly pleads that we need a new *avant-garde* in criticism. Perhaps we do. But notable here is the small indication of the tasks the new *avant-garde* is needed to perform. It seems rather to be desired for its own sake: just for kicks. 'He has a method, but hasn't yet found a subject', remarked a colleague of mine recently, without disapproval. In all these instances what seems to have got left out is any sense of the interaction of critical practice with literature, especially literature between Lady Mede and Lady Dedlock. It is surely with a specific sense of the adequacy or inadequacy of existing criticism for its task of understanding literature that we should decide whether or not we need a new *avant-garde*, just as it is the subject that should prompt the method, rather than the method hunt the subject.

Two or three straws in the wind, merely. We encounter something more sustained in Jonathan Culler's book *Structuralist Poetics* (1975), a telling attempt to mediate between that segment of French criticism which has come to be known as 'Structuralism'[2] and the critical traditions of the English-speaking world. Drawing his main ideas from the French structuralists, Culler proposes to disengage criticism from a wholly interpretative *rôle*, and to direct it towards (firstly) a structuralist poetics, that is a theory of the practice of reading, and (secondly) a new theory of literature and mode of interpretation, whereby literature is not representation or communication, but 'a series of forms which comply with and resist the production of meaning' (p. 259). To elucidate, Culler quotes from an early collection of Roland Barthes (*Le Degré zero de l'écriture*, 1953), the crux being Barthes's affirmation that: 'What is at stake in structural analysis is not the truth of the text but its plurality'. Culler's book should be read with wary attention. Parts of his argument at least are slippery with *non sequitur* and begged question. His polemic is directed against the New Criticism, and he even casts a word or two of approval to 'the historical scholarship which was once the dominant

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mode of scholarship . . . whatever its faults' (p. vii). But historical scholarship, enriched to be sure by close-reading techniques assimilated from the New Criticism, is probably still the dominant mode: a contextual criticism still concerned with the notions of intention and of original response.[3] In a crucial but to my mind unsatisfactory chapter, 'Literary Competence', Culler remarks that:

> The notion that the task of criticism is to reveal thematic unity is a post-Romantic concept, whose roots in the theory of organic form are, at the very least, ambiguous . . . Nor has discourse on literature always been so imperiously committed to interpretation. It used to be possible, in the days before the poem became pre-eminently the act of an individual and emotion recollected in tranquility, to study its interaction with norms of rhetoric and genre, the relation of its formal features to those of the tradition, without immediately feeling compelled to produce an interpretation which would demonstrate their thematic relevance. One did not need to move from poem to world but could explore it within the institution of literature, relating it to a tradition and identifying formal continuities and discontinuities. (p. 119)

Historical criticism, however, did not and does not see the poem pre-eminently the act of an individual and emotion recollected in tranquility.[4] It is constantly aware of the interaction with generic and rhetorical norms, though one has only to recall the meaning of the word rhetoric to see that this does not excuse us (as Culler thinks) from turning from work to world.

From a narrow notion of New Criticism Culler has created a straw man, presented as both the offspring of Romantic individualism and as the idol of our time. Since its claims to a simple 'words-on-the-page' objectivity are easier to refute than the intentionalist objectivity of historical criticism, it is easier to make the structuralist proposals seem more honest, even more useful, by comparison. These proposals are to disengage literature from meaning and criticism from truth. There is no dominant meaning of a literary work of art (and if there seems to be it must be resisted), but literature emits, as it were, a play of 'mean-

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ings', of significations, into which criticism enters as into perpetual and inconclusive motion. In short we are offered total relativism.

A limitation of Culler's book is its superficial treatment of twentieth-century criticism. One has the impression he has never used it for the sustained study of an author or period of literature. A finer book, showing everywhere the marks of a career of scholarly and critical engagement with literature, is Frank Kermode's *The Classic* (1975). This is a remarkable attempt to bring into significant relation critics as diverse as Eliot, Frances Yates, Q. D. Leavis and Roland Barthes. It not only succeeds in this aim, but perhaps its finest critical discussion—that of Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables*—is arguably the fruit of such adroit grafting. It is then the more disappointing to find Kermode, in his final chapter, 'firmly' supporting Barthes against the notion of 'privileged' readings of literature, that is to say of interpretations which are truer, or have greater legitimacy, than others (pp. 76–7, 135). The classic is what will survive because of its plurality of significances (pp. 133, 140), and while Kermode records the high value he sets on communication with the past (p. 134) historical and intentionalist readings have, in this his latest critical position, no greater importance than any other kind of reading.

Classics of the remote past, it is true, have been helped to survive by accommodatory readings (early Christian interpretation of Virgil is the obvious example Kermode gives), but such interpreters believed they had found the truth. Not, perhaps, before the advent of Structuralism has anyone proposed that we can dispense with the idea of the truth, and with the obligation to try to reach it, as best we can according to our lights. Kermode's theoretical position dissolves the distinction between understanding and misunderstanding, or if it does not the conditions for verification are not expounded.[5] And, if we think about it, this is, despite Kermode's distinguished record and present disclaimer, a ready and easy way of dispensing with the past. If we can make more or less what we like of any classic, nothing new is to be gained by reading the classics of periods different or remote from our own.

In *Marxism and Literature* (1977), Raymond Williams

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speaks of how 'the multiplicity of writing' transcends the 'characteristic bourgeois separation of "individual" and "society" ' and 'the older idealist separation of "mind" and "world" '. He goes on to speak of the 'dichotomies fact/fiction and objective/subjective' as 'the theoretical and historical keys to the basic bourgeois theory of literature, which has controlled and specialised the actual multiplicity of writing'. He then adds (relevantly to my purpose here) that another key is to realise how 'the multiplicity of . . . practice was in one way acknowledged, and then effectively occluded, by a transfer of interest from intention to effect. The replacement of the disciplines of grammar and rhetoric (which speak to . . . intention and performance) is a central intellectual movement of the bourgeois period' (pp. 148–9). Setting aside the empirical and historical questions as to whether and when the bourgeoisie separated individual from society and fact from fiction, we should welcome this recall to the importance of intention not retrospectively subordinated to effect. It is even more pertinent to Structuralism than to New Criticism.

There is, however, a different side to Williams's thought in the same book. In the chapter, 'Alignment and Commitment', he declares that in his sense alignment 'is no more than a recognition of specific men in specific (and in Marxist terms class) relations to specific situations and experiences. Of course [Williams then goes on to say] such a recognition is crucial, against the claims to 'objectivity', 'neutrality', 'simple fidelity to the truth', which we must recognize as 'the ratifying formulas of those who offer their own senses and procedures as universal' (p. 199). Must we? There is certainly a sense in which to speak of 'objectivity', 'neutrality' and 'simple fidelity to the truth' is ideological, the ideology here consisting in a conscious or unconscious consensus to resolve conflicting claims by verification: resort to evidence which may, in principle, bear out one claim, or another, or neither. Ideology in this sense (it might be called anterior ideology) is the only thing that makes knowledge, study and society possible, the alternative being the mere affirmation of preference and prejudice. It provides the arena, as it were, in which ideologies in the more common sense of overt social, political or

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religious value-systems come to combat and make good, or fail to make good, their claims. It is the only way, as Raymond Williams surely knows, by which we can defend ourselves against the loaded and imperiously ideological claim. Unless we are to be exposed once again to total relativism, the helpless prey of the gales of doctrine that beat around our heads, such a qualitative distinction between different senses of 'ideology' will be needed. It is good to be warned against expressing partial truths as if they were whole truths, but we should not feel the slightest embarrassment in using terms such as 'objectivity', 'neutrality' and 'simple fidelity to the truth'. If we do, we begin to expose ourselves to ideologies of a different order, and of a cruder and often predatory kind.

Culler and the Structuralists, and Frank Kermode and Raymond Williams (as here quoted), seem to be examples of what E. D. Hirsch in his indispensable book *The Aims of Interpretation* (1976) calls 'cognitive atheism'. This is the assumption that 'all "knowledge" is relative' and can be straightforward subjectivism (everyone sees the same thing in his own way), or 'cultural', 'historical' or 'methodological' relativism (p. 36). If it were possible to hold a simple Lockean view, whereby knowledge was bestowed upon the passive mind from without, cognitive atheism would be fairly easy to refute. It is a great merit of Hirsch's able defence of intentionalism that he takes the relativist argument back to the quasi-Kantian formulation in which it appears strongest.[6] 'If all interpretation is constituted by the interpreter's own cultural categories, how can he possibly understand meanings that are constituted by different cultural categories?' (p. 46). Hence Jan Kott invites 'us' to meet 'Shakespeare, our contemporary'. Roland Barthes invites 'us' to meet 'our' contemporary Racine. But, Hirsch notes, 'The entire development of human history as made by men is potentially contained in the human mind, and may, therefore, by a process of research and re-evocation be understood by men. . . . Men share a common potential to be other than they are' (Auerbach and Dilthey reformulating Vico—and, one might add, Terence) (p. 41). Cultural categories are not epistemological ultimates like Kant's categories of knowledge; they can be acquired

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(p. 46). To contend that we are trapped in cultural relativism is, then, 'a total vulgarization of the great Kantian insight' (p. 38). And indeed, whatever the problems of Kant's epistemology concerning the 'thing-in-itself' that causes our perceptions, his system does logically yield, as P. F. Strawson has shown in *The Bounds of Sense* (1966, pp. 249–51), the possibility of 'identity of reference' and 'the corrected view'. No comfort for cognitive atheism can be had from Kant. Knowledge of the past is possible. Historical and intentionalist criticism is not only a refuge from but the strongest corrective to the relativist position. We may now convict Structuralism (or at least that strand of it discussed in this paper) of choosing to ignore knowledge of the literature with which it plays.

In E. D. Hirsch, historical criticism has found an able and timely defender.[7] I would differ from him only in regard to his confident distinction between 'meaning' (possible to determine and agree) and 'significance' (perhaps impossible to determine and agree). This distinction, to be sure, is one which Hirsch regards as crucial in his defence against cognitive atheism (pp. 1–6), but I am led to disagree through finding that one kind of evidence included by Hirsch in 'significance' is of fundamental importance. However convenient it may be to pack hopeless hermeneutic disagreements up into the term 'significance', leaving the term 'meaning' clear, historical criticism must often, it seems to me, seek the reader's original response, the original significance, as a practical route to the determination of intention. This means that for me, thought not for Hirsch, literary criticism is in the end inseparable from history in the broadest sense of that term.

In turning from critical theory to specific instances of historical criticism, I shall be much concerned with the interpretation of individual works. The four examples I have chosen, taken from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, will I hope cast some light back upon the preceding discussion, and illustrate, perhaps validate, the arguments I have attempted to advance.

When in 1650 Henry Vaughan published the first part of his *Silex Scintillans*, eight poems appeared untitled but linked by a pilcrow or paragraph-mark. Like others in the

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collection they are meditations on death and redemption. Close reading suggests that some of them are personal elegies, though at times the distinction between such elegy and meditation on a redemptive death is fine. However, the first poem, 'Thou that know'st for whom I mourne', seems to refer to the death of a young man; 'Silence, and stealth of dayes!' moves to its end with the reflection that 'now the spirit, not the dust / Must be thy brother' (ll. 27–8). The poem I have most in mind is the last: 'I walkt the other day (to spend my hour) / Into a field.[8] This poem yields itself almost entirely to being read as a meditation on death and resurrection. Only at the very end, held back until that moment, come the two short lines: 'At whose dumbe urn / Thus all the year I mourn' (ll. 62–3). A very literal as well as close reader (such as we do not always encourage when studying Metaphysical Poetry) would assert that the poet ended on a note of personal elegy. It would not, however, seem utterly implausible in our time to read all this on the level of conceit. The criterion of coherence would be met. The poems would still make sense.

However, Miss Gwenllian Morgan, a lover of Vaughan's poems who spent her life in Breconshire, dying in 1939 at the age of eighty-eight, researched into the poet's family history, in the intervals of her work as magistrate and philanthropist.[9] She discovered litigation concerning the purchase by Vaughan's father, on 14 July 1648, of a shroud for his son William. (What a world away from Structuralism all this seems!) Further evidence was adduced by F. E. Hutchinson: allusion to a dead brother in Thomas Vaughan's obscure pamphlet war with Henry More in 1648.[10] Contextual study has here awoken the dead. Uncertain inference from unfashionably literal readings suddenly takes on substance: the poet's younger brother died some eighteen months before *Silex Scintillans* was published. The death of William, Henry's sickness and conversion, the breaking forth of a stronger and more arresting poetry, seem to have been parts of one tragic but creative crisis. We remember the subtitle: *Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations*. How foolish it is to debate in general terms whether criticism should or should not approach the poem 'as the act of an individual'. Sometimes it should, some-

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times not. Here plainly it should. 'I walkt the other day' has a personal dimension we should be blind to ignore. Vaughan does not learn all he seeks, but from the root which he has disinterred he infers a doctrine of death, renewal and resurrection that leads him to aspire through 'Masques and shadows', 'hid ascents', up to the day of God. The sense of a light ever-greater than the poet can comprehend, or in his mortal condition reach, is the dramatic effect of the poem's unfolding from the particular physical situation of its start. But the conclusion's carefully prepared shock of familiarity is the quiet climax of the poem:

> There, hid in thee, shew me his life again
> At whose dumbe urn
> Thus all the year I mourn. (ll. 61–3)

What we have been prepared to accept as a conceit of death and resurrection has a more immediate human reality; it is the death of a man not a flower that the poet mourns and medidates, and his enquiry has in one sense been an attempt to wake the dead. Seldom has the metaphorical reverted to the literal with more power. The union of the awesome and the familiar, at the end, the sense of divine mystery and personal loss, is an astonishing dramatic triumph.

From the personal I turn, for my three remaining examples, to the political, since where the political meaning of literature is concerned contextual study may be thought to have a special contribution. Let us move forward to 1697, the year of the Treaty of Ryswick, when it was apparent, contrary to the expectations of many, that William III, Britain's new monarch of much-disputed title, had secured substantial military success against Louis XIV. In this year Dryden, who as his letters show refused to take the Oaths to William and was a self-confessed Jacobite,[11] wrote for St. Cecilia's Day his *Alexander's Feast*. Several recent critics have toyed with the possibility that Dryden's Alexander glances at William, and Darius at James II.[12] In 1969–70 Miss Bessie Proffitt and I independently proposed the argument that Dryden mocked William's conquests in Alexander.[13] Later contextual inves-

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tigation strengthens the case. I have found among Non-Juror pamphlets on 1688—and we know that Dryden was intimate with Anglican Non-Jurors through his friend Pepys—repeated reference to the case of Alexander and the Jewish High Priest Jaddus, in Josephus. If Jaddus had paid homage to Alexander before Darius's death the Non-Jurors would have had one precedent for taking the Oaths to William; but he had not. Alexander's title by conquest was by no means necessarily good in divine and human law.[14] Further, while Williamite panegyric evidently praised the new monarch quite straightforwardly as an Alexander, Jacobite writing sought to turn the parallel, as William Anderton did in his *Remarks on the Present Confederacy* . . . (1693): 'since our Boobies will be thought to have made a wise Choice of their King, as they call him, and he must be a great Champion, let him be drest with all the imperfections of *Alexander*, with whom they are pleased so often to compare him' (p. 25). Add to this that *Alexander's Feast* was included by Dryden in his *Fables* where, in 'The Cock and the Fox', he speaks of how princes may be 'Alexander'd up in lying Odes' (l. 660) and we may see that the poet himself sought to point up the irony which contemporaries could perceive and which contextual study reveals.

But are we doing Dryden any service by showing that his most famous lyrical poem had contemporary political point? If doing the poet service means rendering him more acceptable to modern assumptions, that is no responsibility of scholarship as humanism. If Dryden's poetry should turn out even more political than has been assumed, we must accept the fact. But, of course, to accept it with gloom is to reject the cultural categories of Dryden's era. Dryden certainly considered that the engagement of his art with the issue of legitimate monarchy made it the more important not only for his contemporaries but also for posterity. How could serious art not consider the ways in which men should live together in society? To see the relation of *Alexander's Feast* with the high politics of its time is to approach it as Ullmann says the earlier Humanists approached the ancient world: not looking for a poem to extract from history, but to find in it a focus for the

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inter-relation of literature, politics and religion. Yet the poem does also come to life in this light. Amid the extraordinary euphoria Dryden beats up at the idea of the artist celebrating a public, indeed world-famous, triumph, the poet's 'God-like Heroe', impiously raised to 'A present Deity' by the crowd, slowly the usual *rôles* change; the artist leads the ruler, not the ruler the artist; subtly the political implications separate themselves out: the poet's mockery of a vain and drunken Alexander contrasts with his awareness of a very different value in Darius, 'Great and Good', 'Fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen, / Fallen from his high Estate / . . . Deserted at his utmost Need, / By those his former Bounty fed' (ll. 75, 77–8, 80–81). The remarkable issue of the feast, as conqueror and concubine set forth to burn Persepolis like another Troy (Alexander who, as Pope was to observe in *The Temple of Fame* (ll. 151–2), ruled all things but himself) is placed in relation to the Virgilian and Augustan myth Dryden had so often deployed in praise of the legitimately ruling Stuarts.

Non-Juror and Jacobite polemic against hunter and warrior kings, Nimrods of past and present, leads me to my third instance: one I have chosen to show the dangers and difficulties of contextual interpretation when there is (as one may feel) too much rather than too little evidence, and not all pointing the same way. In 1951 J. R. Moore suggested that Pope's *Windsor Forest* was not only a Tory, but in effect crypto-Jacobite poem.[15] Apart from Pope's conjuring with the name of Stuart (l. 42) and dedication to the in fact Jacobite Lord Lansdowne, the poem seemed to allude to polemical exchanges over whether William III were another William the Conqueror. Moore suggested that the passage beginning: 'Not thus the Land appear'd in Ages past' in which William I and II appear as tyrannous hunter-kings, carries a political *double-entendre* alluding to William III, and that the excluded (but later printed) lines: 'Oh may no more a foreign master's rage / With wrongs yet legal, curse a future age!' also reflected on William. This interpretation, though based on only two pieces of literary evidence prior to the publication of *Windsor Forest*[16] was accepted by the Twickenham Editors.

What Moore noticed, however, was a mere fragment of

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the great polemical, practical and theoretical debate which sought to understand what had happened in 1688, and which lasted at least until the Sacheverell Trial twenty years later. Was William III a conqueror or not? If not, did that mean that parliament had deposed a monarch, or just filled a vacant throne? If so, was William's conquest wrongful or rightful? In his *Revolution Principles* (1977) J. P. Kenyon has given an admirable outline of this debate. But as one reads further one runs into difficulty. In 1684–5 the Tory historian Robert Brady had contended, with scholarly as well as polemical force, that William I had founded the laws and liberties of England in his own absolute conquest. Brady had thus challenged the common law tradition of the immemorial constitution and the mid-seventeenth-century Leveller and Digger belief in the usurpation by the Norman Yoke of earlier freedoms; he sought to establish a pre-parliamentary source of authority from which the Stuarts' authority descended.[17] Even Jacobite pamphleteers such as Charlwood Lawton (1660–1721), who presented William III as a warrior-tyrant, and whose tract *A French Conquest Neither Desirable Nor Practicable* (1693) may possibly have influenced *Windsor Forest*, did not claim wrongful conquest by William I, for obvious reasons. On the other hand, the notion of Norman usurpation was, if tenable, welcome to Whig thinkers, since parliament might thus seem at least as old as the monarchy, and the idea of contract thus be made to seem historically more plausible.[18] Is Pope therefore writing a Whig poem when he presents William I as a warrior-tyrant? What is Pope up to? Nobody should underestimate his capacity to play brilliantly and elusively with fire. Pope perhaps here walks the knife-edge of political equivocality. But the contextual critic should still try to weigh up the pros and cons. And taking into account the poet's Papist background, and his late hint of his father's Jacobitism,[19] it seems to me that of the several contextual examples which bear on the poem, Tory historiography, the radical myth of the Norman Yoke, Jacobite polemic against William III as a wrongful conqueror, the last is likely to be closest to Pope's early *milieu*, and thus after a pretty full survey of the evidence I come round to support Moore's view.

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My last example of contextual interpretation comes from the period when belief in the Norman Yoke was at its most potent. 'It was the force of conquest; force with force / Is well ejected when the conquered can' (ll. 1026–7) says Samson to Harapha in *Samson Agonistes*. In the case of my three earlier examples (save a little doubt as to the stages of composition of *Windsor Forest*) we know when the work in question was composed and completed. With *Samson Agonistes* we do not. It is still a matter of controversy. Parker, Carey and Fowler go for the early date (begun 1647, finished 1652–3); other scholars, and most recently Christopher Hill and Lady Radzinowicz, go for the traditional Restoration date. I do not mean to go into the conflicting arguments here, but just to observe that the strength of the case against the late date is the absence of clear external evidence for any date. The strength of the case for consists, perhaps, in the date of publication itself, and in the overall sense of Milton's political and intellectual development as demonstrated by scholars such as Hill and Radzinowicz.[20] Such is the human capacity for finding coherences in disparate bodies of material that arguments of this latter kind cannot easily decide the question. Equally, many of the lines cited by Hill as allusions to the Restoration seem to me capable of bearing different constructions.

The point I wish to urge will I fear be received with incredulity. It is that so long as we don't know when *Samson Agonistes* was written we can't fully know what it means. Or rather, if the play has the slightest bearing on the political events of seventeenth-century Britain, which is possible though not easy to deny, then we cannot take the full measure of the drama. Does this tragedy of regeneration, grace, and an heroically self-sacrificial death in the bringing on of a political cataclysm, celebrate the overthrow of the 'kingdom old' and all that Milton associated with Stuart monarchy? Was it written on the same emotional wave as the *Defence of the People of England* and *Eikonoklastes*?[21] Or is it a courageous defiance of the Restoration, arising from Milton's deep conviction that 'the Philistines, like the government of Restoration England, were enemies of God who could not be removed except by violence', as Hill puts it (p. 445)?

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The issue is at least more open than we have been used to suppose. And the example, to my mind, puts to the test the efficacy of 'meaning' versus 'significance' and shows that in interpretation the criterion of 'coherence' cannot tell us all we want to know. In terms of his own theory, Hirsch should be able to know the 'meaning' of *Samson Agonistes*: he could say, for example, that it was a biblical drama of regeneration cast in a classical form. And certainly more historically-minded intentionalists than Hirsch must, if the early date be assumed, concede two stages of intention, since a Milton who holds back his drama of the 1650s but publishes in 1670 must know that change of times will entail a different relation of work to world in the minds of his readers. If the interpretation of *Samson Agonistes* were now to seem a more open question than that of my other examples—a great work with a plurality of significances, 'a series of forms which comply with and resist the production of meaning', etc. (a situation which might be welcomed or regretted) then my argument is that this would be so precisely because in this case we lack that approximation to objectivity which clear knowledge of context can alone supply.

In a review of a structuralist collection first published in 1970, David Lodge referred to George Orwell as 'the arch-empiricist among literary critics.'[22] It will be remembered that according to Emmanual Goldstein in *1984* 'The empirical method of thought, on which all scientific achievements of the past were founded, is opposed to the most fundamental principles of Ingsoc . . . But in matters of vital importance—meaning, in effect, war and police espionage, the empirical approach is still encouraged . . .' (Ch. 9). Orwell is writing simply, even crudely, to create a strong polemical effect, but the distinction he makes here is worth pondering. Can one not imagine a situation in which scientific disciplines (being matters of vital importance) continued to rely on a pattern of assumptions that included the empirical factor, while the Humanities in general did not? In *1984* Winston Smith has been deprived, among many other things, of the past. The official version of the pre-revolutionary era strikes him as unconvincing, but it may be true that 'the average human being [is] better off now'

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(Ch. 7). He just doesn't know. The remarkable episode in which Winston tries to interrogate the old man in the pub in the worker's district (Ch. 8) is surely an ironical reflection on Chapter XVII of Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890), 'How the Change Came', in which the old man informs the narrator how the creative proletarian revolution has been achieved. Winston asks the old man about the capitalists in their top hats:

> The old man brightened suddenly.
> 'Top 'ats!' he said. 'Funny you should mention 'em. The same thing come into my 'ead only yesterday, I dono why. I was jest thinking, I ain't seen a top 'at in years. Gorn right out, they 'ave. The last time I wore one was at my sister-in-law's funeral. And that was—well, I couldn't give you the date, but it must 'a been fifty years ago. Of course it was only 'ired for the occasion, you understand.'

It isn't what Winston wants to hear. He wants to know whether the capitalists in their top hats were 'lords of the earth' or not. He desperately needs to know whether it was far better or far worse before the revolution. Perhaps he most wants to hear the former, but, if you like, what he demands is a crudely ideological report. What the old man actually says—neutral in that his reminiscences don't address themselves to Winston's questions—is curiously liberating: hiring a top hat, the row with the gent on boat-race night, and it is for such information, among other kinds, that we need expressions like 'objectivity', 'neutrality', 'simple fidelity to the truth'. Certainly the top hat is a mark of class distinction. How oppressive capitalism was is here left an open question. But evidently you could bump 'accidental-like' into a drunk wearing a top hat, and have a row; and you could hire a top hat for your sister-in-law's funeral. The old man could hardly have given a more sensitive report of the past.

Let that be my text for the wider argument that knowledge of the past, or the opportunity to get such knowledge, is a fundamental liberty of civilized society. We are acquainted also—I am thinking of W. J. Bate's admirable

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book—with the notion of 'the burden of the past'. But that burden turns out to be a freedom in the end. It is liberating to look back beyond Milton and Spenser to Chaucer; or beyond Virgil to Homer; or beyond high literature to the popular ballad. Freedom is not meaningful without knowledge, and that is what makes the search for truth fundamental. That is the humanism I have in mind in my title, while scholarship is what comprises all the necessary means to that end.

We should strongly distrust those who propound the extreme relativistic position in criticism. Society is not likely to deny the value of contributions to the cultural history of our land, but if criticism were to come to no more than the Structuralists sometimes seem to wish, or Frank Kermode claims in the last chapter of *The Classic*, then it would be difficult to see why a hard-pressed government and an under-financed education system should spend money on the study of literature at all. Because it means so much more than that, because its resources have not even yet been fully proved against such major topics as the writings of Dryden, Ben Jonson, and one might add Shakespeare (to take only seventeenth-century examples), we should not allow it to be eroded. In the long run, at least, we can feel confident. Human interest in the diversity of human experience is too deep-rooted in us to go long unsatisfied.

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NOTES

[1]In this paper I have had occasion to criticise some writers for whom I feel the highest respect. Whether my discussion of certain of their remarks prove convincing or no, I wish to record my general acknowledgement to the authors of *The Victorian Sage*, The New Arden Edition of *The Tempest*, and *The Country and the City*—to name just three titles that spring to mind.

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[2]I recognise that 'Structuralism' has become a portmanteau term for several different critical trends. I wish to question here only those positions and arguments which are specifically introduced in my discussion.

[3]Historical criticism and New Criticism have successfully nourished one another, perhaps because each has used the *idea* of intention as part of its interpretative procedure. 'Intention' has been able to apply to both the apparent *rationale* of an aesthetic object, and plain external evidence and convincing explanation of original response. Allan Rodway, *The Truths of Fiction* (1958; 1970 edn.), pp. 113–4, helpfully suggests the word 'purport' for this dual but often not inconsistent sense.

[4]One might ask how Culler's generalisation applies to, for example, W. J. Courthope's *History of English Poetry* (1895–1910), or to Kathleen Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (1953), or to Alastair Fowler, *Triumphal Forms* (Cambridge, 1970), or to Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975). John Reichert, *Making Sense of Literature* (1977), pp. 67–72, has good criticisms of Culler's book.

[5]See my full review of *The Classic*, in *Cambridge Review*, 27 Jan. 1976, pp. 119–122, and also Oliver Taplin's in *E in C*, vol. xxvi, pp. 339–345. Reichert, op. cit., pp. 131–4, has made some apt remarks on Ch. 4 of *The Classic*.

[6]Reichert, op. cit., p. 21, acutely observes that the 'French . . . scepticism, currently much in vogue, tends to be cast in the language of ontology and epistemology . . .'. It is in its apparently casual taking over of fundamental philosophical terms to express its reaction against 'realism' and 'the classic' that recent French criticism is at its least plausible.

[7]*Validity in Interpretation* (1967) and *The Aims of Interpretation* (1976). For some criticism of Hirsch's earlier book, however, see Reichert, op. cit., pp. 103–10.

[8]See also A. J. Smith, 'At the Grave of Henry Vaughan's Brother', *Anglo-Welsh Review*, vol. 16, no. 37 (Spring 1967), pp. 31–41, and 'Henry Vaughan's Ceremony of Innocence', *Essays and Studies*, 1973, pp. 35–52.

[9]F. E. Hutchinson, *Henry Vaughan: A Life and Interpretation* (Oxford, 1947), pp. v–vi.

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[10]Ibid., pp. 96–7.

[11]C. E. Ward, ed. *The Letters of John Dryden* (Duke University Press, 1942), pp. 123, 108–9.

[12]Notably Alan Roper, *Dryden's Poetic Kingdoms* (1965), pp. 8–9, 13, 28; and Earl Miner, *Dryden's Poetry* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1967), p. 273.

[13]Bessie Proffitt, 'Political Satire in Alexander's Feast', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. xi (Winter 1970), pp. 1307–1316; Howard Erskine-Hill, 'John Dryden: Poet and Critic' in Roger Lonsdale, ed. *Dryden to Johnson*, Sphere History of Literature in the English Language (1971), pp. 50–51.

[14]Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XI, Chapter 8. For Dryden's connection with Anglican Non-Jurors, see James Kinsley, 'Dryden's Character of a Good Parson and Bishop Ken', *RES*, N.S. vol. iii (1952), pp. 155–58. For the contemporary political significance of Alexander and Jaddus, see Jeremy Collier, *Dr. Sherlock's Case of Allegiance Consider'd* (1691), pp. 26, 154; George Hickes, *A Vindication of Some Among Ourselves Against the Principles of Dr. Sherlock* (1692), p. 37; John Kettlewell, *Duty of Allegiance Settled on its True Grounds* . . . (1691), p. 68; and *An Answer to a Late Pamphlet Entitled Obedience and Submission to the Present Government, Demonstrated* (nd.) [Cambridge University Library Pressmark: Acton d. 25 989], p. 4.

[15]J. R. Moore, '*Windsor Forest* and William III', *MLN*, vol. lxvi (1951), pp. 451–4.

[16]Narcissus Luttrell's *Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs* and, more important, the Williamite pamphlet *Political Remarks on the Life and Reign of King William III* (c. 1702): see *The Harleian Miscellany* (1744 edn.), vol. iii, p. 345.

[17]See the important treatment of these points in J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 195–9, 229–35.

[18]For these aspects of post-1688 Whig thought, see J. P. Kenyon, *Revolution Principles: The Politics of Party 1689–1720* (Cambridge, 1977), Ch. 7. Note especially the position of John Tutchin, and Daniel Defoe in his *Jure Divino* (1706), as set out by Kenyon in pp. 105–15.

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[19]*Imitations of Horace*, Ep. II, ii, l. 64: 'For Right Hereditary tax'd and fin'd . . .'.

[20]Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (1977), Ch. 31 and Appendix; M. A. Radzinowicz, *Toward 'Samson Agonistes': The Growth of Milton's Mind* (Princeton, 1978).

[21]See Hill, op. cit., Chs. 11–13.

[22]*MLR*, vol. lxx, no. 1 (Jan. 1975), pp. 128–30.

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Imagination in *The Rape of the Lock*

DAVID FAIRER

POPE, like his fellow Augustans, understood that the imagination was essentially an anarchic force. In recognizing this he was accepting a well-established body of artistic, philosophical and medical theory as it had developed since classical times.[1] The dangerous ambivalence of the imagination (*phantasia* or *imaginatio*), which at its highest could act as the handmaid of the intellect (*ratio*) bringing the *gnosis* or divine vision of the true 'reality', but which could also be the vehicle of melancholic delusions and spiritual error, had been understood since the time of Plato. Dante and Sidney may have celebrated the imagination's godlike exploits, but by the seventeenth century the concomitant dangers were receiving greater emphasis. A particularly difficult spiritual challenge (one which Milton explored) was to distinguish truly divine insight from mistaken apprehensions within the fancy—a discrimination the imagination itself was not equipped to make. In the age of Pope it remained a truism that the imagination was an image-making faculty, not a faculty for evaluating reality. Because like the passions it was a faculty of the 'sensitive soul', not the 'rational soul', it lacked within itself the moral sense whereby things could be judged to be true or false, right or wrong. For Richard Sibbs, 'the principall use' of the imagination was '*properly* to judge what is comfortable or uncomfortable, what is pleasing or displeasing to the outward man, (not what is *morally* or *spiritually* good or ill)' (*The Soules Conflict with Itselfe*, 1635, p. 250). The faculty psychology of a hundred years before still made sense to Augustan writers (as the latest mechanistic theories did not),[2] and in Milton they had a poet who offered them a rigorous and moving exploration of the imagination's power for good and ill, and the role of the 'higher' faculties in overruling it. For Pope and his contemporaries the truth could not be affirmed until the imaginative faculty had submitted its findings to the rational faculty, which acted upon the received images by applying to them the

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judgment of the understanding. Such a compartmentalizing of the mind made the imagination responsible to the judgment *whenever truth was required.* If truth did not press its demands, however, then the imagination was left remarkably free, eager to assert itself for the purposes of pleasure and to have its way with the judgment, the will and the affections. Thomas Wright had warned that in the grip of a particular passion the imagination 'putteth green spectacles before the eyes of our wit to make it see nothing but greene' (*The Passions of the Minde in General*, 1620 ed., p. 51), and Pope expressess a similar idea:

> All Manners take a tincture from our own,
> Or come discolour'd thro' our Passions shown.
> Or Fancy's beam enlarges, multiplies,
> Contracts, inverts, and gives ten thousand dyes.
> (*Epistle to Cobham*, 25–28)

The 'tincture' of the imagination is inevitably falsifying, a colouring which can distort the truth by blurring its outline, its dimensions and stature, and substituting the beautiful, though secondary, qualities from within our own minds.

In *The Rape of the Lock* the truth does press its demands upon the imagination. The tension between these two elements lies behind the clash of personalities within the poem, making it at several levels a drama of the mind. Although the poem is not an allegory exactly, it is more allegorical in character than has usually been allowed. It is concerned with the imagination as a glorious, amoral, irresponsible and alluring thing, a paradoxical cluster of adjectives as apt for Belinda as for the sylphs, and it is by way of this parallel between heroine and mythology that I want to explore the work's allegorical elements, and offer an approach which can reconcile our appreciation of its imaginative world with an evaluation of its human concerns.

The most important feature of Pope's transformation of his poem from the two-canto version of 1712 to the extended five cantos of 1714 is the introduction of the machinery of the sylphs. It is generally agreed that as a result of their presence 'Belinda's world is shot through with . . . exquisitely shimmering beauty,'[3] that they are brilliant, dazzling, and a triumphant exercise of the poet's

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artistic imagination. Nevertheless, Dennis's accusation that the machinery does not affect the 'action' of the poem,[4] raised the recurring question as to whether the sylphs are integrated into its structure, and one way round this problem has been to detect in them certain symbolic qualities so that they relate to the social world over which they preside. Reuben Brower's list of what the sylphs 'stand for' ('feminine honour, flirtation, courtship, the necessary rivalry of man and woman') risks overkill. Geoffrey Tillotson takes a more external, literary approach when he considers that the sylphs exemplify Le Bossu's prescription for the machinery of epic: 'the sylphs are "theological" (they represent "good" and "bad"), "physical" (they roll planets and attend to the weather), and "allegorical" or "moral" (the machines include Spleen)'.[5] But the sylphs, being removed from the world of moral judgments, represent neither 'good' nor 'bad'. They delight in beauty without judging it, being as concerned to protect earrings and fan as they are to preserve chastity. To them a 'dire Disaster' outrages decorum rather than morality:

> Whether the Nymph shall break *Diana*'s Law,
> Or some frail *China* Jar receive a Flaw,
> Or stain her Honour, or her new Brocade,
> Forget her Pray'rs, or miss a Masquerade . . .
> (ii, 105–8)

As with Keats's poetic imagination, which 'has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen' (Keats to Woodhouse, 27 Oct. 1818), so with the amoral sylphs. Neither are the sylphs physical beings: they are all light and colour, and Pope goes out of his way to stress their disembodied character as 'Transparent Forms, too fine for mortal Sight' (ii, 61).

Pope's favourite image for the imagination is the rainbow, because it exists merely as brilliant colour. The rainbow has no physical existence (*pace* Newton) except as disembodied beauty that can come and go without being physically caught or touched. Colour is fancy's realm, because colour is shifting, uncertain and accidental, a secondary quality which 'exists' as an idea in the mind (Locke, *Essay*, II, viii, 13–15), and hence an ideal image

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for the imagination. Pope repeatedly uses colour as the area within which the fancy operates:

> There sober Thought pursu'd th'amusing theme
> Till Fancy colour'd it, and form'd a Dream.
> (Donne, *Satire IV*, 188–9)

(The thought is Pope's, not Donne's.) He can talk of love as 'drest in Fancy's airy beam' (Horace, *Odes* iv, i, 41), and in the passage already quoted it is 'Fancy's beam' which plays irresponsible tricks with reality:

> Fancy's beam enlarges, multiplies,
> Contracts, inverts, and gives ten thousand dyes.

Pope regularly stresses the shifting, insubstantial quality of the fancy,

> Where Beams of warm *Imagination* play,
> The *Memory*'s soft Figures melt away.
> (*Essay on Criticism*, 58–9)

As light is extinguished at the close of *The Dunciad* it is inevitably *Fancy* which is the first victim of endless night:

> Before her, *Fancy*'s gilded clouds decay,
> And all its varying Rain-bows die away.
> (*Dunciad*, iv, 631–2)

For Pope as a young man, writing poetry is a hopeless pursuit of the original vision:

> We . . . do but labour to fall short of our first Imagination. The gay Colouring which Fancy gave to our Design at the first transient glance we had of it, goes off in the Execution; like those various Figures in the gilded Clouds, which while we gaze long upon, to seperate the Parts of each imaginary Image, the whole faints before the Eye, & decays into Confusion.
> (letter to Henry Cromwell, 12 Nov. 1711)

What are the sylphs, then, but Pope's most powerful image for the fancy?

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Some to the Sun their Insect-Wings unfold,
Waft on the Breeze, or sink in Clouds of Gold.
Transparent Forms, too fine for mortal Sight,
Their fluid Bodies half dissolv'd in Light.
Loose to the Wind their airy Garments flew,
Thin glitt'ring Textures of the filmy Dew;
Dipt in the richest Tincture of the Skies,
Where Light disports in ever-mingling Dies,
While ev'ry Beam new transient Colours flings,
Colours that change whene'er they wave their Wings.
(ii, 59–68)

The vision will not hold still. The restless, dazzling charm of the imagination associates itself with Belinda, whose eyes as well as mind are 'sprightly' and 'unfix'd', and it is this beam which sets itself up within the poem as the rival of the sun. To gaze in Belinda's face annihilates moral judgments.

Geoffrey Tillotson is in fact closer to the centre of the poem when he acknowledges the uncanny way in which it tends to demoralize the critic: 'The criticism the poem provides is sometimes more a picture than a criticism. It is so elaborate, shifting, constellated, that the intellect is baffled and demoralized by the aesthetic sense and emotions.' (p. 120.) One of the main effects of Pope's introduction of the sylphs into his poem is indeed to give it this moral complication. It is not simply that any censure of coquettish 'levity' of heart is deflected onto the sylphs who 'contrive it all' (i, 104), or (working against Belinda this time) that we withdraw any approval of female purity once we are told

'Tis but their *Sylph*, the wise Celestials know,
Tho' *Honour* is the Word with Men below.
(i, 77–78)

This kind of moral alternative is obviously too clear cut for such a work as *The Rape of the Lock*. Its moral subtlety goes far deeper because it exploits the inherent ambiguity of the imagination itself, which enters the poem with the sylphs. They suspend our approval and our disapproval: 'levity' and 'honour' are concepts implying the operation

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of the judgment by 'Men below' (in this context merely 'erring Mortals' ironically 'blind to Truth', however much they may agree on their evaluations). Such concepts are annihilated by the sylphs, who are 'Spirits, freed from mortal Laws' (i, 69), the masters of 'Fancy's maze' whose skilfully manipulated distractions help to preserve the women they patronize:

> Oft when the World imagine Women stray,
> The *Sylphs* thro' mystick Mazes guide their Way . . .
> (i, 91–2)

Note the irresponsibility whereby the judgment of the world becomes a fancy, and the judging word 'stray' is transformed to a delightful stroll. In such ways the sylphs literally 'demoralize', enacting the amoral role of the imagination by dissolving the tidy human boundaries between virtue and vice. In a threatening world, says Pope, girls are not guided by neat moral imperatives, but by their fancies. And, luckily for them, such a lack of human commitment is the very thing that preserves them. The imagination of the coquette offers so many distractions that she avoids falling victim to her admirers: the sylphs bombard women's hearts with images, leaving them delighted, distracted and uncommitted. 'Fancy's maze' protects them, in that one fancy drives away another before things get too serious:

> With varying Vanities, from ev'ry Part,
> They shift the moving Toyshop of their Heart;
> Where Wigs with Wigs, with Sword-knots Sword-knots strive,
> Beaus banish Beaus, and Coaches Coaches drive.
> (i, 99–102)

The eighteenth-century 'toy shop' was 'a fancy shop' (*OED*) and 'toy' an 'odd fancy' (Johnson).

Within the poem the sylphs and what is associated with them (notably the lock itself) represent the characteristics of the imagination, just as Clarissa (and the scissors) embody the challenge of truth. Pope's machinery of fancy, naturally expressing itself in terms of light, finds a striking parallel in the decoration he lavished on his Twickenham

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grotto. One early visitor delighted in Pope's magical invention in such terms as might have been used of the sylphs in *The Rape of the Lock*:

> Mr *Pope*'s poetick Genius has introduced a kind of Machinery, which performs the same Part in the Grotto that supernal Powers and incorporeal Beings act in the heroick Species of Poetry: This is effected by disposing Plates of Looking glass in the obscure Parts of the Roof and Sides of the Cave, where a sufficient Force of Light is wanting to discover the Deception, while the other Parts, the Rills, Fountains, Flints, Pebbles, &c. being duly illuminated, are so reflected by the various posited Mirrors, as, without exposing the Cause, every Object is multiplied, and its Position represented in a surprising Diversity.
>
> (*The Newcastle General Magazine*, Jan. 1748. The 'Epistolatory Description' is reproduced by Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City* (1969), pp. 237–43.)
>
> pp. 237–43.)

This 'poetick Genius' of Pope's resides in the perfect union of his art and his imagination: the disposition and workmanship within the grotto are skilful, but the poet has thereby created for the beholder a place of deceit, where objects are perceived by the senses not as they really are, but as through the distorting, enhancing glass of the fancy. The 'Machinery' of 'incorporeal Beings' fulfils a role parallel to that of the sylphs in *The Rape of the Lock*, throwing varied and surprising angles of light on the objects within: the cause of the aura is hidden, but the effect is to represent the objects now transformed as if by the imagination of the beholder. Just as the sylphs enact the imagination in Pope's poem, surrounding Belinda with playful light-effects (so that the object herself is won over from the world of Nature), so the beautiful deception of Pope's concealed art within the grotto substitutes fancy's beam for truth.[6]

The scene of Belinda at her dressing-table is a ritual of the enhancement of Nature, in which the imagination co-operates once more with art. She presides at a sacrament where transubstantiation has become a transposition of fact into fancy:

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> This Casket *India*'s glowing Gems unlocks,
> And all *Arabia* breathes from yonder Box.
> The Tortoise here and Elephant unite,
> Transform'd to *Combs*, the speckled and the white.
> (i, 133–6)

The rites are certainly those of narcissistic pride, and the heroine is clearly arming herself for battle, but the presence of the imagination in this passage should warn the reader against reciting the moral too solemnly. Modern critics are agreed that the values of Belinda's society are confused, and the line 'Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux' (i, 138) is frequently quoted as symbolising this disarray. Geoffrey Tillotson and Maynard Mack both believe that the line betrays a 'moral disorder' in the heroine's social world.[7] But the stress at this moment of the poem should be less on 'society' than on the particular *inner* world of the coquette. This world may outrage our moral preconceptions and strain decorum to breaking-point, but the disorder is fundamentally an imaginative profusion, and during this scene Belinda is becoming a creature of the imagination. For the moment ethical judgments are suspended, and the disarray is not 'sad' (a critic's word), but delightful.

The necessary gloss to this passage is provided by Pope himself, in an anonymous letter contributed to *The Guardian*, No. 106 (13 July 1713),[8] a few months before he completed the extended version of *The Rape of the Lock*. Its parallels with the poem are remarkable. In his dream Pope peers through a window in his Mistress's breast, and tries to sketch the confusion within her heart as one image rapidly chases out another:

> The first Images I discovered in it were Fans, Silks, Ribbonds, Laces, and many other Gewgaws, which lay so thick together, that the whole Heart was nothing else but a Toy-shop.
>
> (*The Prose Works of Alexander Pope*, ed. Norman Ault, 1936, p. 131.)

Such disorder betrays the lack of hierarchy within the fancy. Pope is desperate to discover where he as a human being stands amongst all this female frippery, but he has

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to contend with some unexpected rivals for her attention. Her fancy turns restlessly from one image to another:

> There then followed a quick Succession of different Scenes. A Play-house, a Church, a Court, a Poppet-show, rose up one after another, till at last they all of them gave Place to a Pair of new Shoes, which kept footing in the Heart for a whole Hour. These were driven off at last by a Lap-dog, who was succeeded by a *Guiney* Pig, a Squirril and a Monky. I my self, to my no small Joy, brought up the Rear of these worthy Favourites. I was ravished at being so happily posted and in full Possession of the Heart: But . . . I found my Place taken up by an ill-bred awkward Puppy with a Mony-bag under each Arm. (Ault, pp. 131–2)

Aurelia is plainly a coquette: the Church takes her fancy, but so does a pair of new shoes. Nothing is valued for longer than it occupies her imagination. Her image-making faculty is working overtime, but the judgment has no place. Amid this confusion Pope struggles to turn his own transient image into a permanent occupant of her heart. Similarly, in the poem the Baron's billet-doux, carrying its confession of love, is trapped amid the brilliant paraphernalia upon Belinda's dressing-table, vainly asserting its message in competition with so many other rivals for her attention. To intrude a moral message about 'the values of society' at this point blurs the fine suggestive detail that Pope achieves at the psychological level of his drama.

The product of the toilette is a new Belinda proudly displaying her hair to the world. The twin curls sported at her neck are not the result of judgment, but are created by the imagination as the coquette's chief weapon. They are there to entrap her male admirers in fancy's maze:

> Love in these Labyrinths his Slaves detains,
> And mighty Hearts are held in slender Chains.
> (ii, 23–4)

The curl is literally a 'fancy', since it is the sylphs (once again representing the imagination) who 'divide the Hair' (i, 146). After all, their duties in tending 'the Fair' include

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> To draw fresh Colours from the vernal Flow'rs,
> To steal from Rainbows ere they drop in Show'rs
> A brighter Wash; to curl their waving Hairs . . .
> (ii, 95–7)

and in such ways the fancy claims women for its own. At the dressing-table, therefore, art does all it can, but it is the imagination which makes the decisive gesture.

Thus transformed by the imagination, Belinda becomes its creature. Emphasis shifts from solid physical reality to the intangible, so that in this new context her identity (as a newly 'painted Vessel') merges with that of the boat carrying her to Hampton:

> But now secure the painted Vessel glides,
> The Sun-beams trembling on the floating Tydes,
> While melting Musick steals upon the Sky,
> And soften'd Sounds along the Waters die.
> (ii, 47–50)

She is no longer the lazy, petulant girl hammering the floor with her slipper, but now resembles a 'goddess' in the powerful hold she has on our imaginations. Her function is well seen here in a comparison with Swift, whose goddesses are clearly *not* celebrated by the imagination; they are regularly shattered by fact and reality, their abstract force dragged into a suicidal conjunction (and rhyme) with the concrete:

> Proceeding on, the lovely Goddess
> Unlaces next her Steel-Rib'd Bodice
> ('A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed', 23–24)

The art lavished on Belinda at her dressing-table is raised far above this kind of thing by the mock-heroic direction of the poem (the inverse of Swift's movement towards travesty) which transforms the scene to a magic ritual. The phrase 'Repairs her Smiles' (i, 141) in a Swiftian context would destroy her, but as part of the 'mystic Order' the sting of the phrase is strangely lessened. Even the idea of 'toil' (powerfully felt in the 'Anguish, Toil and Pain' of Corinna's daily self-assemblage) gains a fastidiousness in this context:

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> From each she nicely culls with curious Toil,
> And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring Spoil.
> (i. 131–2)

Like the imagination itself Belinda is brilliant, unstable, alluring, and gloriously independent of morality. Her curls may be her chief glory, but another object identified with her, and which she has power to transform, is the cross upon her breast: enacting the imagination's power, her beauty metamorphoses it from the symbol of Christian truth into a brilliant extension of herself, sparkling in sympathy with her. Won from its responsibility within the world of nature, it now annihilates creeds, and, uniting men rather than dividing them, becomes an image 'Which *Jews* might kiss, and Infidels adore' (ii, 8). But in the gossipy world of the court where truth goes for nothing and reputations shatter in a moment (a world thriving on fiction and fancy) this 'painted Vessel' is precarious. Cleanth Brooks has usefully noted the recurrent references to the 'frail china jar' as an image of Belinda's *chastity*, 'like the fine porcelain, something brittle, precious, useless, and easily broken'.[9] But the jar represents the heroine even more closely than this suggests, for the fate that threatens it haunts Belinda also. The shattering of this jar would destroy its charm for the imagination. It would no longer be a thing for contemplation, whose wholeness and perfection lifts it above a physical existence, but instead a mere artifact, whose pieces betray the laborious effort put into its making, now exposed as 'painted Fragments' (iii, 160). Once cracked it would suddenly revert to its physical origins, revealing the 'important Hours' that went into its making and which are now necessary for its repair:

> White lead was sent us to repair
> Two brightest, brittlest earthly Things
> A Lady's Face, and China ware.
> (Swift, 'The Progress of Beauty', 41, 50–2)

Once more Swift's goddess has to confront the nightmare: her face no longer casts a spell over her beholders, but has descended to the world of truth, where it is just another cracked object needing repair.

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Long before Belinda was roused by the lap-dog and the Baron's letter (cunningly tied around the dog's neck?), the Baron himself had been engaged in serious business. Besides seeking a rendezvous, he had constructed a sacrificial altar to Love, on which he had offered his whole collection of female frippery gathered from former idols ('three garters, half a Pair of Gloves' etc.—his masculine version of the coquette's sword-knots). He had to this point lived within the imagination of a lover (the twelve romances out of which he constructs the altar are evidence enough of this), but he symbolically abjured his career as a sexual philanderer for the one supreme prize.[10] All the trophies which his fancy had fed on were consumed by the flames. One vision now haunts him, that of Belinda and her lock of hair:

> Th' Adventrous *Baron* the bright Locks admir'd,
> He saw, he wish'd, and to the Prize aspir'd . . .
> (ii, 29–30)

In their encounter across the card-table at Hampton Court Belinda loses the Queen of Hearts to the Baron, and during the interval of the coffee-drinking ritual he is given his chance to issue a public challenge to her feelings for him. The sylphs, aware that a dire event is imminent, that Belinda's existence as a creature of the imagination is threatened, awake her consciousness of the cherished lock. But fancy's 'mazy Ringlets' (ii, 139) are drawing the Baron inexorably closer:

> A thousand Wings, by turns, blow back the Hair,
> And thrice they twitch'd the Diamond in her Ear,
> Thrice she look'd back, and thrice the Foe drew near.
> Just in that instant, anxious *Ariel* sought
> The close Recesses of the Virgin's Thought;
> As on the Nosegay in her Breast reclin'd,
> He watch'd th' Ideas rising in her Mind,
> Sudden he view'd, in spite of all her Art,
> An Earthly Lover lurking at her Heart.
> (iii, 136–144)

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This is the moment at which the virgin is to fall. It is also the moment when the imagination is expelled by truth. By loving the Baron (wearing his image in her heart) Belinda no longer 'rejects Mankind'. Ariel does not abandon her out of pique, but because the sylphs, who like Pope's imagination have worshipped and cherished her, are rendered powerless the moment truth intervenes. And so inevitably Ariel retires from her with a sigh, 'his Pow'r expir'd (iii, 145). The mutual love of the Baron and Belinda is, literally, a moment of truth—that is why Clarissa supports it. She gives the scissors to the Baron in order finally to recall her from the world of girlish fancy. Aubrey Williams is right in seeing here that Belinda has been given the opportunity to make her 'Fall' a fortunate one.[11]

The sylphs are satanically involved in the events of the poem: they tempt Belinda to wrongful pride and ambition, and through the lock they tempt the Baron also. The fact that Pope stresses the curling quality of the lock suggests that we are meant to sense its intriguing satanic character. Milton's devil hid within the 'mazie foulds' (*P.L.* ix, 161) of the serpent in order to lead Eve astray, and at the moment of temptation he appeared before her as 'Fould above fould a surging Maze' (ix, 499) as he 'Curld many a wanton wreath in sight of *Eve,* / To lure her Eye' (ix, 517–8); we remember that Comus's domain is within 'the blind mazes of this tangl'd Wood' (*Masque*, 180), a place where it is important that the lady see clearly, undazzled by the fertile imagination of her tempter; to sport with 'the tangles of *Neæra's* hair' (*Lycidas*, 69) is to delight in the fanciful world of love elegy rather than attempt the true vision of the divine poet. Such Miltonic entanglements usually involve the delighted fancy, revelling in its 'error' (a word whose etymology Milton consciously exploits).[12] Nor is it only Milton who explores this idea:

> The wanton lover in a curious strain
> Can praise his fairest fair;
> And with quaint metaphors her curled hair
> Curl o're again.
> (George Herbert, 'Dulnesse', 5–8)

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(And in 'Jordan II' Herbert speaks of 'Curling with metaphors': the self-delighting imagination is distracted from Heavenly truth.) By making the maze a recurrent idea in *The Rape of the Lock* Pope is able to exploit this notion of delightful falsehood implicit in the fancy. In the world of the imagination which the sylphs represent the maze is a beneficent idea, and it is human truth which threatens—the 'mystic Mazes' through which they guide young women are a protection against reality. But it is in the curls of Belinda's hair that the Miltonic idea has full force. The lock allures Belinda's worshippers by its 'mazy Ringlets' (ii, 139) which

> graceful hung behind
> In equal Curls, and well conspir'd to deck
> With shining Ringlets the smooth Iv'ry Neck.
> Love in these Labyrinths his Slaves detains . . .
> (ii, 20–3)

The dangerous *conspiracy* is confirmed when Pope remarks that 'Fair Tresses Man's Imperial Race insnare' (ii, 27). Once Clarissa's clear beam of truth strikes through, however, curls become irrelevant, a mere distraction from the unpalatable truth:

> Curl'd or uncurl'd . . . Locks will turn to grey
> (v, 26)

The curl is less a 'thing' than a temporary posture. The sylphs preside over it because it is a fancy; hair is the true thing, the curl a metaphor. No wonder that once the sylphs have gone, the single lock which remains loses its curl:

> The Sister-Lock now sits uncouth, alone,
> And in its Fellow's Fate foresees its own;
> Uncurl'd it hangs . . . (iv, 171–3)

The 'poor Remnant' has surrendered its power as a thing of the imagination: the truth about hair is that time will turn it grey, and, however alluring, a curl is only a distracting temporary beauty.

The Baron's outrage is that he treats the lock as a thing rather than an idea. With the help of Clarissa's scissors (the scissors being to truth what the lock is to the imagin-

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ation) the Baron snips off the hypnotizing lock, badge of coquettry, and thus challenges Belinda to descend to the realm of truth. He also challenges her *pride*, that passion which her imagination has fostered and cherished. The Baron's action and Clarissa's words combine in an attempt to make the truth dawn upon Belinda; the Baron may be her foe, but Belinda should be grateful even to her enemy:

> If once right Reason drives *that Cloud* [Pride] away,
> *Truth* breaks upon us with *resistless Day*;
> Trust not your self; but your Defects to know,
> Make use of ev'ry *Friend*—and ev'ry *Foe*.
> (*An Essay on Criticism*, 211–214)

The Baron's initiative is given theoretical support by his ally Clarissa, who steps forward as truth's representative to insist that reality cannot be held at bay for long:

> Oh! if to dance all Night, and dress all Day,
> Charm'd the Small-pox, or chas'd old Age away
> (v, 19–20)

Clarissa knows that Belinda cannot exist as an object of the imagination forever. If Belinda is sensible she will preserve what her beauty has gained; she will surrender her merely hypnotic 'charm' (the allure of the fancy) in favour of a deeper and more genuine 'virtue' committed to, rather than denying, human truth. While the sylphs embraced her she rejected mankind—that is, she cherished the imagination and shut out the truth. Clarissa's scissors challenge her: the sharp cutting-edge of truth has met material hair, not angelic substance which can unite again. Belinda is not a sylph and must not mistake the aura for reality. Pope had alerted us to her danger through Ariel's words:

> Know further yet; Whoever fair and chaste
> Rejects Mankind, is by some *Sylph* embrac'd . . .
> (i, 67–8)

To reject mankind is to ignore the truth about herself as a woman ('the flesh-and-blood creature . . . who marries, breeds, ages, and wears, has all sorts of dire consequences —and eventually dust and the grave').[13] The cutting of the

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lock is a sad moment (the sylphs leave her forever), but it is also, as Clarissa points out, her moment of opportunity.

J. S. Cunningham detects within Clarissa's speech some 'limitations in her range of vision' (rightly, since she is representing truth, not imagination) and he is troubled by her worldliness and opportunism.[14] But in this, as in other ways, Pope has judged his tone to perfection. Clarissa, expressing the moral of the poem, must obviously be cleared of any hint of prudishness: indeed, it is against this that she issues her warning. Her 'opportunism' has in fact been an attempt to recall imagination back to truth, and though she has failed to persuade Belinda, her words re-echo as we contemplate the heroine's fall.

The Baron acts, and it is Belinda who reacts prudishly. In allegorical terms, the gnome Umbriel (a prude roaming the earth in search of mischief) descends into her spleen to bring 'the vapours' up to the surface. The spleen is technically the breeding-ground of the base imagination, the melancholy fancy which in women can lead to self-delusions and hysteria. Bright's *Treatise of Melancholie* (1586) puts it pithily:

> darknes & cloudes of melancholie vapours rising from that pudle of the splene [pollute] both the substance, and spirits of the brayne, [and cause] it, without externall occasion, to forge monstrous fictions, and terrible to the conceite . . .[15]

This nightmare breaks in upon the now distraught Belinda. Pope's version of the unpleasant melancholy fancies which haunt her is a playful one:

> Unnumber'd Throngs on ev'ry side are seen
> Of Bodies chang'd to various Forms by *Spleen.*
> Here living *Teapots* stand, one Arm held out,
> One bent; the Handle this, and that the Spout . . .
> Men prove with Child, as pow'rful Fancy works,
> And Maids turn'd Bottels, call aloud for Corks.
> (iv, 47–50, 53–4)

The transforming imagination has become a nightmare of sexual incongruity; vessels have merged with the human form once again, but no longer to recall a china vase or

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Cleopatra's barge. Here vessels gesture mockingly, and like Comus's grotesque followers the metamorphosed maids warn against the lure of physical desire.

Belinda's fanciful reaction to the 'rape' takes the wrong, prudish form, failing to see the Baron's action as a social joke which relies for its deeper meaning on his dedication to his love. The joke-rape, nevertheless, is a perversion of what Belinda has been wanting, a gesture which to achieve womanhood she should have accepted calmly and rightly. The result of this inability to see clearly at the important moment is that Belinda turns at once from coquette to prude,[16] from a flighty and irresponsible girl to a possible bleak future as an old maid; Clarissa's prophecy (laughed out of the coquettish world that surrounds Belinda) has struck the mark. Maturity *must* finally dispel fancy, here taking the form of the brilliant mythological world of the sylphs and gnomes. Belinda has freed herself from the coquettish fancy of the sylphs (because of the 'Earthly Lover lurking at her Heart') only to be reclaimed by the fancy in the shape of Umbriel, who after his successful trip into her fancy-breeding spleen exults over his new disciple:

> Triumphant *Umbriel* on a Sconce's Height
> Clapt his glad Wings, and sate to view the Fight . . .
> (v, 53–4)

At the breaking of the gnome's vial Belinda yearns for a sad and solitary refuge:

> Oh had I rather un-admir'd remain'd
> In some lone Isle, or distant *Northern* Land . . .
> There kept my Charms conceal'd from mortal Eye,
> Like Roses that in Desarts bloom and die.
> What mov'd my Mind with youthful Lords to rome?
> O had I stay'd, and said my Pray'rs at home!
> (iv, 153–4, 157–60)

Such an over-reaction is both false and fanciful, and is ominously reminiscent of Spleen's handmaid, *Ill-nature*,

> like an *ancient Maid*,
> Her wrinkled Form in *Black* and *White* array'd;
> With store of Pray'rs, for Mornings, Nights, and Noons,
> Her Hand is fill'd . . . (iv, 27–30)

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It also echoes the longing for solitude in Adam's cry of guilty hopelessness after the Fall:

> O might I here
> In solitude live savage, in some glade
> Obscur'd, where highest Woods impenetrable
> To Starr or Sun-light, spread thir umbrage broad . . .
> (*P.L.*, ix, 1084–7)

The flattering sylphs have left her, to be replaced by the imaginative world of the guilt-ridden and prudish gnomes, the sad mental landscape of the melancholic. Umbriel's bag has its effect too, and as Thalestris 'fans the rising Fire' (iv, 94) Belinda's mind forms a horrific picture of what had previously been a delightful ritual:

> Was it for this you took such constant Care
> The *Bodkin*, *Comb*, and *Essence* to prepare;
> For this with tort'ring Irons wreath'd around?
> For this with Fillets strain'd your tender Head,
> And bravely bore the double Loads of Lead?
> (iv, 97–102)

The imagination has again transformed the scene, and for the lighter-than-air fancy of the sylphs has substituted ideas of oppressive weight and constriction. The act of imagination which created her lock is now seen (equally wrongly) as a ritual of bondage. The dressing-table has become a torture-chamber. Belinda cannot break out of her fancy, only migrate from one fancy to another. Clarissa, the truly mature woman (like Martha Blount in the *Epistle to a Lady*) is not enwrapped in the fancy in this way, but occupies an area within the poem set apart from the dazzling female world around the heroine.[17] She stands before us on a pair of 'dull, sublunary legs' (in Keats's phrase), and her down-to-earth message, though it receives a chill reception, strikes the note of human truth.

As all along it has been a fancy rather than a physical object, it is fitting that the lock should vanish during the struggle; it dissolves as all gestures of the imagination are bound to do. It would have 'died' anyway, once it had become separate from Belinda; it would have become a pathetic relic, telling of nothing but dust and ashes:

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Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become
of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly
and grown old.
(Browning, 'A Toccata of Galuppi's', 44–5)

But Browning's cold draught of truth is not the note on which Pope wishes to end. The lock began as an object of fancy and now it is to end as one, playfully transformed to the most exalted level of the imagination. Pope ends his poem of compliment with a fancy of his own, by which the lock is awarded its final metamorphosis:

But trust the Muse—she saw it upward rise,
Tho' mark'd by none but quick Poetic Eyes . . .
A sudden Star, it shot thro' liquid Air,
And drew behind a radiant *Trail of Hair.*
(v, 123–4, 127–8)

By a delightful compliment Pope rescues the imagination from the chaos of melancholy and frustration on which the dramatic action of the poem ends, and makes a playful gesture towards its divine character. The stellification of the lock is a parody of the release of the contemplative soul as sought by Il Penseroso and the Lady in the *Masque*, to be achieved by the divine imagination's guiding the intellect to knowledge of God. The 'quick Poetic Eyes' of imagination view the lock on its journey and so do the sylphs who pursue it through the skies. In spite of truth's attack the lock has remained untouched, and, as with Pope's poem itself, the challenge to the fancy has brought about a glorious release. At the end of his work Pope suggests that the *Lock* will remain a vivid image for as long as men (whether beaus, lovers, star-gazers or prophets) have imaginations.

In November 1714 Pope discovered to his surprise that Arabella Fermor had married. In writing to congratulate her he completely eschewed the fancy he had lavished on his Belinda. Approaching her now as a married woman about to take on many new responsibilities as friend, wife and parent, he stressed the 'better things' that she could expect from her future status, 'better' because these would

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be more firmly grounded. A poet's imagination had celebrated a girl's beauty and charm, but from now on Belinda the woman would strive for a more solid (though ironically less lasting) tribute:

> It may be expected perhaps, that one who has the title of Poet, should say something more polite on this occasion: But I am really more a well-wisher to your felicity, than a celebrater of your beauty. Besides, you are now a married woman, and in a way to be a great many better things than a fine Lady . . . You ought now to hear nothing but that, which was all you ever desired to hear (whatever others may have spoken to you) I mean *Truth.*

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NOTES

[1]See Murray Wright Bundy, *The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Mediaeval Thought* (Urbana, 1927) University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, xii; and Baxter Hathaway, *The Age of Criticism: The Late Renaissance in Italy* (Ithaca, New York, 1962), pp. 303–96.

[2]On Renaissance faculty psychology, see Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady. A Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580 to 1642* (1951), 2–5. See also Hathaway, *op. cit.*, p. 340. The seventeenth-century physiological background to Augustanism is explored by Michael V. DePorte, *Nightmares and Hobbyhorses. Swift, Sterne and Augustan Ideas of Madness* (San Marino, 1974), pp. 3–105.

Babb has demonstrated the close links between the Cave of Spleen episode (iv, 17–88) and Renaissance and seventeenth-century medical theory ('The Cave of Spleen', *RES*, xii, 1936, 165–76).

[3]J. P. Hardy, *Reinterpretations* (1971), p. 66.

[4]John Dennis, *Remarks on Mr. Pope's Rape of the Lock* (1728). See *Pope. The Critical Heritage*, ed. John Barnard (1973), p. 103.

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[5]Reuben A. Brower, *Alexander Pope. The Poetry of Allusion* (Oxford, 1959), p. 155; Geoffrey Tillotson (ed.), *'The Rape of the Lock' and Other Poems*, 3rd ed., 1962, p. 122.

[6]Frederick Bracher considers the grotto as 'a continuing expression of Pope's old delight in wandering in the maze of fancy' ('Pope's Grotto: the Maze of Fancy', *HLQ*, xii (1948–9), 141–162, p. 161).

[7]See *'The Rape of the Lock' and Other Poems*, ed. Tillotson, 3rd ed., 1962, p. 121, and Maynard Mack, 'Mock-heroic in *The Rape of the Lock*' (1950), in *Pope. 'The Rape of the Lock'. A Casebook*, ed. John Dixon Hunt (1968), pp. 154–7, p. 156.

[8]The evidence for its attribution to Pope is given in full by Ault (*Prose Works*, 1936, pp. lxv–lxvii).

[9]Cleanth Brooks, 'The Case of Miss Arabella Fermor: A Re-Examination', *Sewanee Review*, li (1943), 505–24. Reprinted in *The Well Wrought Urn* (1968 ed.), 65–84, p. 77.

[10]To Hugo Reichard the Baron is a philanderer throughout ('The Love Affair in Pope's *Rape of the Lock*', *PMLA*, lxix (1954), 887–902), and J. S. Cunningham follows this line (*Pope. 'The Rape of the Lock'*, 1961, p. 55). But it would be misleading to argue that the Baron remains in the grip of his imagination and merely wishes to add Belinda to the list of his trivial 'conquests'. His dignified and unfanciful reply to Sir Plume (v, 131–40) and his alliance with Clarissa suggest that Pope does not wish to trivialize the Baron's interest in his love-trophy.

[11]Aubrey Williams, 'The "Fall" of China and *The Rape of the Lock*', *PQ*, xli (1962), 412–25, p. 420.

[12]See Arnold Stein, *Answerable Style: Essays on 'Paradise Lost'* (Minneapolis, 1953), p. 66f.

[13]Murray Krieger, 'The "Frail China Jar" and the Rude Hand of Chaos', *Centennial Review of Arts and Sciences* (1961). Reprinted in *Pope. 'The Rape of the Lock'. A Casebook*, ed. John Dixon Hunt (1968), 201–219, p. 210.

[14]J. S. Cunningham, *Pope: 'The Rape of the Lock'* (1961), pp. 44–5.

[15]Quoted by Babb, *RES*, xii (1936), p. 167.

[16]'The central action in the poem is Belinda's descent from coquette to prude, from the dazzling rival of the sun

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. . . to the rancorous Amazon who shrieks in self-righteous anger.' (Martin Price, *To the Palace of Wisdom*, 1970 ed., p. 151.)

[17]This is not to suggest that Clarissa's speech does not show Pope's imagination at work. John Butt has rightly pointed out that 'the many-layered richness' of the passage fuses his three inspirations 'drawn from fancy, morality, and books' ('The Inspiration of Pope's Poetry', in *Essays in the Eighteenth Century. Presented to David Nichol Smith*, Oxford, 1945, 65–79.) Clarissa shows how the fancy can *serve* truth. By incorporating her speech for the 1717 edition of his *Works*, Pope clearly felt the need to make the claims of truth explicit.

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Book Reviews

SIDNEY

Sir Philip Sidney: a Study of his Life and Works. By A. C. HAMILTON. Cambridge University Press, 1977; £6.50.

Sir Philip Sidney: The Maker's Mind. By DOROTHY CONNELL. The Clarendon Press, 1978; £6.50.

In the past twenty-five years—and none too soon—there has been an impressive growth in Sidney studies. The cramped and uncompromising Cambridge edition, 'on grey paper with blunt type', can have won few converts and indeed probably discouraged all but the most ardent Arcadians. The turning point was John Buxton's classic study, *Sir Philip Sidney and the English Renaissance* (1954). Since its publication, much distinguished editorial, scholarly and critical work has done belated justice to one of the most original and arguably the most versatile of the Elizabethan writers. Here we have two new critical studies which in a number of ways invite comparison: both undertake to illuminate Sidney's work by relating it afresh to his life and times; both argue that writing became for Sidney a substitute for an active public life; and both are finally somewhat disappointing, though in different ways.

Professor Hamilton is on the whole unadventurous in the evidence he deploys. He rehearses the well-known facts of Sidney's life and quotes from his correspondence with Languet in order to prove that, despairing of public employment, Sidney deliberately chose the vocation of poet as a serious alternative. This is uphill work; for there is no evidence for such a decision in Sidney's letters, his contemporaries appear to have known nothing of it, and Sidney continued throughout his life to be on the look-out for chances of active public employment, to create them when they did not present themselves, and to seize them avidly when they did. Professor Hamilton, to do him justice, does not minimise the case against himself. He quotes Edward Molyneux, who should have known, as describing the *Old Arcadia* as the product of Sidney's 'vacant and spare times of leisure', as well as Sidney's own descriptions of the work

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as 'a trifle and that triflingly handled' in his dedication to his sister (who certainly did know) and as a 'toyful book' in writing to his brother. These last two references Professor Hamilton, like other critics before him, considers he can safely regard as meaning the opposite of what they say on the authority of Fulke Greville's well-known words on 'the figure *Ironia*'; but this will hardly answer. Ironical self-depreciation might do well enough in addressing the reader of a work intended for general circulation, but Sidney evidently did not intend the *Old Arcadia* for publication, and in addressing the sister who of all people was bound to know the truth of the matter, the figure *Ironia* would be merely fatuous. When Sidney reminds Mary of the casual way in which the work was written we must either take him at his word or assume a conspiracy between brother and sister to pull the wool over the eyes of the friends among whom it was envisaged that the work was to circulate; which is unthinkable.

Professor Hamilton is no more convincing in his handling of other evidence for Sidney's determination to devote himself to the vocation of poet. The *Defence* simply cannot be read as 'a manifesto [declaring Sidney's] emergence as a public poet'; to state that the *Old Arcadia* was the 'prose equivalent' of *The Faerie Queene* is highly misleading (such a claim for the revised version would be a different matter) as Professor Hamilton implicitly admits in the next sentence when he refers to the *Old Arcadia* as 'a private work', whereas Spenser's poem in virtually all its aspects declares its public nature. It is all too easy to quote Sidney's reference in the *Defence* to his 'unelected vocation' and say 'the studied nonchalance behind this modest disclaimer suggests that poetry has become his elected vocation'. From such wilful misconstruction nothing is safe. One is justified in such a procedure only when there is strong independent evidence to support it. In Sidney's case this is quite lacking. Again, to refer to 'Sidney's plan to write an extended poem of 108 sonnets and eleven songs' begs a large question. There is no knowing what Sidney planned when he wrote the first of Astrophil's sonnets, while the bunching of the later songs may suggest some continuing uncertainty of intention; and the claim that sonnet 30 'marks

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a turning-point in the sequence because it marks a turning-point in Sidney's life' is a case of supporting one unprovable speculation with another.

Logic indeed is not Professor Hamilton's strength. The most flagrant example concerns the *New Arcadia*. On p. 125 he argues that 1584 was too late a date for the beginning of the revision because 'By that year time was running out for Sidney'. Indeed it was, but how could Sidney have known? Again (p. 173) he states that 'the *Arcadia* rightly remains incomplete. It is unfinished because his life was unfinished'. In one sense this is so true that it does not need saying; but Professor Hamilton's notion that the work was left unfinished by Sidney as a kind of emblem of his own unfulfilled ambitions is too fanciful. It is far more likely that the work was set aside when the appointment as Governor of Flushing gave Sidney reason to feel not so much that his life was unfinished as that it was just beginning.

All in all, there is no real evidence that, given the choice, Sidney would at any time have elected the life of the poet in preference to that of the soldier or statesman. But as Molyneux said 'he could endure at no time to be idle', and so it was natural enough that, in the absence of preferment, he should engage in an activity which he evidently enjoyed and which was not dependent on outside factors. But to say that he considered that writing poetry was better than doing nothing is not to say that he considered that nothing was better than writing poetry.

Dr Connell's corresponding argument that in the *Old Arcadia* Sidney discovered that he could as a writer continue his contribution to public political debate, particularly on the matter of the French marriage, is hardly more convincing. The case is founded on verbal and situational parallels between Sidney's letter to the Queen and the *Old Arcadia*, with Sidney in the role of Philinax, the loyal adviser to his prince. But many of the parallels adduced rest on the veriest commonplaces of the day, and, furthermore, it is questionable to talk of 'the warning which Sidney directs to his countrymen' in a work which he apparently never intended and certainly never attempted to publish.

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In their discussions of the *Old Arcadia* both authors place considerable emphasis on the problems posed by its closing episode—the trial of the princes presided over by Euarchus, and indeed Dr Connell's discussion of the work hardly goes beyond this. According to Professor Hamilton 'The dilemmas of the trial scene are not meant to be resolved by Basilius's revival', and in his view the trial shows that Euarchus is, like the other characters, imperfect: 'His judgment becomes suspect when he condemns Gynecia to death for a crime she did not commit', and in his rigid application of justice he himself becomes unjust. This is exactly the kind of misjudgment Sidney himself anticipates in a passage which Professor Hamilton actually quotes on p. 40—'often extraordinary excellences, not being rightly conceived, do rather offend than please'. There is in fact no question of Euarchus being subject to criticism, as Dr Connell recognizes, though she misses the true explanation. Euarchus has been appointed by Philanax and popular consent to administer the laws of Arcadia in the absence of a legitimate ruler, and is particularly concerned not to act *ultra vires*. In this position he has no option but to abide strictly by the letter of the law. Mercy is the prerogative of the true prince only. Shakespeare's Duke could give Angelo authority to enforce or qualify the law; Philanax could offer Euarchus no such option. The problem is solved by Basilius's revival not simply because this nullifies the charge of murder but because he has every right to exercise the royal prerogrative of mercy.

This does not mean, however, that the princes are guiltless, or that the balance between head and heart remains unresolved, as Dr Connell suggests. The near rape of Pamela and actual seduction of Philoclea cannot be condoned, however great the sympathy with which Sidney treats the princes. As Musidorus recognizes, the impulse of love is ambivalent—'Thou celestial, or infernal, spirit of love'; it may tend towards harmony or disorder. The princes have behaved like Marlowe's Leander and, as the Goddess Ceremony points out in Chapman's continuation, have foregone those rites and forms which channel biological impulses and prevent human society from reeling back into the beast.

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The crucial factor, which neither Professor Hamilton nor Dr Connell mentions, but which gives the final all-embracing irony to the *Old Arcadia*, is that Euarchus's intention in visiting Arcadia had been in part to negotiate marriages between his son and nephew and the two daughters of Basilius. (So much, incidentally, for Dr Connell's theory of Euarchus, the old man who constitutes a barrier between the young lovers, as 'blocking character'.) The moral here touches the distinction between ends pursued by deceit and dissimulation for personal gratification and the same ends brought about in due form and order for the public good.

Dr Connell is generally the more successful in relating Sidney to his social and cultural background. She argues cogently, using such evidence as the delight of the age in paradox, that Sidney showed what was perhaps the most poetically fruitful of renaissance attitudes, the ability to hold opposing attitudes in equilibrium, sometimes of rest, sometimes of tension. Her presentation of Sidney as a 'courtly maker' is illuminating too but also, I think, slightly limiting. The emphasis on *homo ludens* takes one so far and no farther, and is thus less helpful than the concept of role-playing, which subsumes the idea of play but goes beyond it, to compass not only Astrophil writing sonnets to Stella but also the manner of Sidney's dying of a gangrenous wound at Arnheim.

Dr Connell's concentration on the background is always interesting, although it makes for a somewhat patchy handling of Sidney's writing and occasionally makes one wish for a more systematic treatment. Professor Hamilton's preoccupation with the foreground has different advantages and drawbacks. Accounts which are sometimes perilously close to summaries of short poems, such as *Certain Sonnets*, give little sense of their essential texture and are of limited value; whereas the same treatment of a long and complex work like the revised *Arcadia* may be a godsend to the confused new-comer, and it is indeed in his treatment of the prose narratives—their sources, their structure and so on—that the main merit of his book lies.

Each work contains a number of minor irritants. Both authors are given to bolstering the case for links between the man and the times with points that have an air of

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desperation. Professor Hamilton notes that in the *New Arcadia* Euarchus's age is reduced to fifty, the age of Sidney's father in 1578 when Sidney was writing the *Old Arcadia*; and tells us that 'Queen Andromana appears, as would Elizabeth to the young Sidney, a well-preserved older woman, having "an exceeding red hair with small eyes" '; while Dr Connell appears to consider it helps her case that Mary Sidney was pregnant when Sidney was writing what he described as 'this child which I am about to father'. Nor is her logic much happier than Professor Hamilton's. To contend that 1589 is the likely date for *The Lady of the May* because it supposedly refers to the Queen's choice whether or not to marry Anjou, and then to discuss on the following page several other works written for the Queen earlier in the decade on the subject of the choice of life is self-defeating; while in her discussion of *The Defence* (p. 39) she neatly cuts off the branch on which she has been sitting by suggesting that the work is an example of the paradox of Epimenides—'All Cretans are liars'; which would, of course, disqualify it as evidence. But the argument that the poet is not concerned with literal truth must apply only when he is writing poetry. In other modes of discourse Sidney would certainly expect of the poet normal standards of veracity. Professor Hamilton has a provoking way of substituting assertion for argument, as when he professes to settle the Astrophel/Astrophil argument by affirming, quite contrary to the facts, that 'No-one can say "Astrophil and Stella" '. Dr Connell for her part goes in for the kind of unwieldy footnotes, threatening to shoulder the text right off the top of the page, against which graduate students are warned. Both authors quote comments which Fulke Greville almost certainly intended to apply to the *New Arcadia* in their discussion of the Old. All of which is a pity. Disagreement on large issues of interpretation may provoke fruitful reactions; such trivial defects as these are merely vexatious; Sidney deserves better of two such evident enthusiasts.

Jesus College, Oxford C. F. WILLIAMSON

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BLAKE'S SYMBOLS

Blake as an Artist. By DAVID BINDMAN. Phaidon, 1978; £9.95.

William Blake. By MORTON D. PALEY. Phaidon, 1977; £11.95.

David Bindman's *Blake as an Artist* is a detailed chronological survey of all aspects of Blake's visual art, including the Illuminated Books. It's also an attempt to place Blake in relation to the English art of his time, using Robert Rosenblum's *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art* (1967) as a starting point. Though Bindman acknowledges the 'fundamental unity' of Blake's art and writing, his interest in the latter is primarily in the light it sheds on the former. What sets him apart from most art historians, though, is his knowledge of and respect for the poetry. Though hardly the most rigorous or inventive of readers, he's careful about Blake's words. If he sometimes leaves one with the impression that the meanings of those words are clearer and less controversial than they in fact are, that makes him no worse than many a literary historical or critical counterpart.

What's best about the book is the way it blends Blake's purely pictorial or *non*-composite art into the conventional (and largely literary) account of his intellectual development. Bindman argues, for example, that a group of watercolours of *c.* 1784 on apocalyptic subjects forms 'a kind of intermediate stage' between the imprecations against tyranny in some of the prose poems of *Poetical Sketches* (1783) and the apocalyptic fervour of the Prophecies of the early 1790s; that a roughly drawn and incomplete group of scenes from the Fall of Man and its aftermath anticipates important themes in the *Songs of Experience* and links them to the earlier *Tiriel*; that a series of tempera paintings of Biblical scenes Blake executed for Thomas Butts between 1799 and 1800 marks a major shift from his earlier preoccupation with the Fallen World (in the Prophetic books of the 1790s) to the redemptive visions of the later epics; that the designs for Milton's *Comus* (first set, 1801) rework themes from the *Book of Thel* (1789); that the synoptic structures of *Vala*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem* have their visual equivalents in equally monumental designs for

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the *Last Judgement*, *Fall of Man*, and *An Epitome of Hervey's Meditations Among the Tombs*; and that the most important of these, an enormous *Last Judgement* fresco (now lost), grew up in much the same manner and time as Blake's myth of the Fall and Regeneration of Albion; it too being progressively elaborated to include more and more figures ('upwards of one thousand', reported one viewer) and motifs. Though not all of these points are new, Bindman is the first to weave them into a coherent and comprehensive chronology. No other book I can think of gives so complete a picture of how Blake re-worked his major themes and preoccupations from year to year.

Though the book contains no overriding thesis or argument, it's filled with interesting ideas and interpretations. On occasion these take the form of visual analogues, as when Bindman likens the following lines from Blake's early *The French Revolution* (1791) not just to their conventional source, the Book of Revelation, but to the altogether more suggestive 'sublimity and attenuation'—simultaneously spare and grandiose, self-conscious and sincere—of the paintings of Fuseli:

> Then the ancientest Peer, Duke of Burgundy, rose from the Monarch's right hand, red as wines
> From his mountains; an odor of war, like a ripe vineyard, rose from his garments,
> And the chamber became as a clouded sky; o'er the council he stretched his red limbs,
> Cloth'd in flames of crimson.

At other times, Bindman's art-historical background allows him to make a familiar point in a strikingly novel manner. When discussing the relations between Blake and Benjamin West, for example, he reminds us that the latter's commission from the bishops of the Established Church to paint a series of Biblical scenes for St. George's Chapel of Windsor specifically precluded the illustration of texts from the Prophets or the Book of Revelation; an anecdote which throws the political implications of Blake's attachment to these texts into striking relief. (West, according to Martin Butlin in the recent Tate Exhibition Catalogue, was an especially important and hitherto neglected influence on

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Blake, and Bindman refers to him frequently, reproducing several of his paintings. One of these, the *Apotheosis of Nelson*, Bindman sees as a plausible starting point for Blake's own *Spiritual Form of Nelson guiding Leviathan*, among the weirdest and most ill-considered—if now somewhat less idiosyncratic—of Blake's conceptions.)

Bindman is also good on the relation between pictorial technique and subject matter or theme in specific works. In the 1790s, Blake began experimenting with colour-printing, a technique that creates rich, mottled textures at the expense of firm, determinate outline (its most famous products are the large colour prints of 1795, notably *Newton* and *Pity*). Though Blake used the technique for selected copies of several of his Illuminated Books, *all* copies of the *Book of Urizen* known to have been produced in the 1790s were colour-printed. The resulting impression of density and amorphousness, argues Bindman, helps to create in *Urizen* 'an epitome of the Burkian sublime as applied to visual art: the immensity of chaos and the awe-inspiring sense of primeval struggle rendered in verbal and visual language of indefinite forms and mysterious images. The universe in a state of "Petrific abominable chaos" is marvellously suggested by titanic figures moving tormentedly through a threatening void, implying also the titanic effort necessary to create form out of that chaos'. This seems to me not only right but worth saying, since the artful variation of textures in Blake's designs—often within individual books or groups of illustrations—is an all-too-frequently ignored source of meaning in his works.

In discussing Blake's often cryptic or seemingly contradictory aesthetic views, Bindman has two distinct advantages over his predecessors. The first is an easy familiarity with the myriad complications of pictorial 'Neoclassicism', in particular those of the English branch of what Rosenblum and others call 'Romantic Classicism'. The second is his book's rigorously chronological format. Blake voiced his aesthetic theories and preferences with seductive assurance and finality: 'Rubens was a fool'; 'Grecian is Mathematick form: Gothic is living form'; 'To Imitate I abhor'. But he also changed his mind, defending quite different points of view (' "Copy for Ever" is my Rule') with equal

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force and conviction. The danger, then, compounded by Blake's own tendency to revise and realign, to see his life and work as whole and unified, is the ease with which single statements become detached from their contexts; late attitudes to Grecian and Gothic, for example, being confused with quite different early ones. Bindman's strictly chronological approach inhibits such confusions: we see exactly how and why the Gothicism of Blake's apprenticeship differed from that of the period just after his Public Exhibition of 1809; and we also see, thanks to the wider international context, how both sorts can coexist with a penchant for the 'Homeric', as in the Romantic Classicism of other Northern European artists, notably Fuseli, Flaxman, the Scottish painter Alexander Runciman, and the Danish artist Nicolai Abilgaard.

The drawbacks of a chronological approach are several. On the simplest level, works which belong together but were composed at different times—*Innocence* and *Experience*, for example—are discussed separately, in different chapters. (The only break in chronology is for the Milton designs.) There's also the problem of Blake's several attempts at a 'Bible of Hell', the 'Books' of which—*America, Europe, The Song of Los, Urizen, Ahania,* and *Los*—fit together (or fail to) in interesting ways, only some of which Bindman's year by year format is well-suited to discuss. More importantly, strict chronology leaves little room (and Bindman chooses not to make any) for a series of questions of a more general nature about differing aspects of Blake's artistic practice. For example, if and when (and how) Blake takes advantage of the symbolic associations of colour? What his relation is to the iconographical practice of his contemporaries (and not just those of the established tradition)? Whether his visual symbols work in the same way—yield the same sorts of meanings—as his verbal symbols? How he balanced decorative and symbolic demands? In what ways he relates pictorial style to theme and subject matter? Bindman's approach allows him to deal in passing with aspects of each of these questions, but to discuss none systematically or in detail.

One danger of this lack of any non-chronological system is that it necessitates frequent and usually implicit appeals

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to authority. In discussing the marginal decorations to various Illuminated Books, for example, birds are referred to, without explanation, as 'divine thoughts', clusters of ivy as symbols of 'the unpleasant qualities of material existence' (a quotation from Keynes, who also gives no reasons), floating figures as 'personified forms of nature'. These identifications may well be correct, but on what grounds did Bindman arrive at them? The audience for whom his book is primarily intended it art-historical, and unlikely to know the Illuminated Books in any detail. It can only defer to the author's specialized knowledge or assume some implied critical consensus. But should it also defer on questions of simple identification or description? *Is* the figure at the bottom of the 'Introduction' plate to *Experience* female (Erdman doesn't think so)? Or *are* the two figures whose feet touch on plate eight of *Milton* Palamabron and Rintrah (again *pace* Erdman)? Who says the chained figure on plate four of the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* embodies sightless reason and its opposite number boundless energy (not Keynes)? In other words, what are the grounds upon which Bindman bases his unargued symbolic and narrative identifications and descriptions? And just how wide and detailed is that 'general consensus' upon the meanings of the Illuminated Books to which he refers in his Preface?

Bindman's tendency to shy away from controversy or detailed argument creates a false sense of the coherence and intelligibility of a number of the works he discusses. This in my opinion is his book's only significant failing, and it's a shame for several reasons, not least because it fosters passive reading and viewing habits of a sort Blake consistently abhorred. That Blake abhorred these habits in terms themselves authoritarian ('To generalize', he generalizes, 'is to be an Idiot') in part accounts for his capacity to inspire them: still, it's the letter one ought to attend to and promote when summoned by the calls of prophets of liberty, not the summoning spirit. Bindman's better than many: there's nothing proprietary or disciple-like about the way he unravels Blake's mysteries. It's just that he too, however inadvertently, contributes to a sense of the works he analyzes *as* mysteries; and it's this sense that Blake at

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his best—the Blake whose heaven was a place of 'intellectual warfare'—would think a misrepresentation.

Bindman, of course, could argue that his book was already a long one, and that anything more detailed would be inappropriate in his sort of introductory survey. And he does admit, in a rare moment of that mandarin diffidence characteristic of his discipline, 'that many scholars regard the Illuminated Books as more complex than I do'. Still, he ought to have conveyed more of a sense of how richly awkward and ambiguous many of the works he discusses can be; told us somewhat more fully and frequently how his readings were arrived at and what stands in their way. To take a single small instance: in discussing the first plate of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Bindman associates one of several tiny figures cavorting around the word 'Visions' with pestilence, carefully distinguishing it from others who shoot arrows, but giving no reasons for the association. Presumably he's thinking of similar though larger figures on plate nine of *Europe* from whose serpent-shaped trumpets pour flecks of mildew, blighting corn. But *Europe* appeared a year *after* Blake's *Visions*. Moreover, in an earlier Illuminated Book, *America* (also later than *Visions*), pestilence is said to be shot from arrows. Bindman's effortless association of pestilence with the bow- and arrow-less figure cavorting around the first word of the title of *Visions* is more problematic than it appears. Several fascinating and highly contentious assumptions (such as Blake's tendency to allude to unpublished—even unwritten?—work) seem to underlie it. What grounds, then, the impression of easy authority with which it is delivered? Bindman, as I've already suggested, is no especially flagrant offender in this regard, but he is an offender. In almost all other respects, his book is admirably informative and reliable.

Morton D. Paley's *William Blake* is a large-format picture book prefaced by seventy-three pages of introductory text. Though altogether less ambitious than Bindman's book, Paley's manages to convey precisely that sense of the awkwardness and ambiguity of Blake's art—and the consequent critical controversy it has generated—which Bindman's more substantial text slights. Occasionally, as in

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discussion of the identity of the enigmatic youth on the frontispiece to *Experience*, or the puzzling head-piece to Chapter Two of *Jerusalem*, Paley simply lays out rival interpretations. At other times, by taking the oddities of Blake's artistic practice seriously, he raises interesting general questions. At the end of a brief discussion of the marginal decorations to the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, for example, Paley objects that 'even Blake cannot have been indifferent to the failure of these images to communicate'; a point which raises for me the larger question of Blake's relation to his audience: Who he thought it was? What concessions he was prepared to make to it? Whether, at some points in his career, he considered it at all?

Not that Paley altogether avoids simplifying or arguing from authority. How could he, given only seventy-three pages in which to introduce each of Blake's works, as well as the main lines of his biography. Though he too, like Bindman, never talks directly or systematically about the sources and nature of Blake's pictorial symbolism, the symbols themselves slip quietly into his readings, as though we'd all long known and agreed upon the meanings of, for example, raised palms, serpents, long beards, streaming hair, and over-muscled limbs. Paley, of course, like Bindman, *is* an authority, editor of *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* (née *Blake Newsletter*), and author of the excellent *Energy and Imagination*, yet another and more substantial sort of introduction, and nothing he says is wrong or unexpected, though it's easy to differ on detail and emphasis. My only real objection concerns the book's supposed function. Though Paley tells us in the Preface that 'there exists no introduction to his work published in a large format with a sufficient number of plates to indicate the rich variety of Blake's production in different modes and in various media'. I can't help thinking that those works that do exist—some of which fulfil nearly all of Paley's criteria—suffice.

Nine years ago, in the Preface to the American paperback edition of *Fearful Symmetry*—still the best and most thorough of introductions to Blake—Northrop Frye confessed that were he to write his work again, 'I should probably write a more conventional book, more concerned

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with the reader's superficial difficulties with the text and designs'. Few would want Frye's work rewritten, but many must feel, as I do, that Blake studies remain altogether too far from the actual words and lines—and the 'superficial difficulties' they raise—of Blake's pictures and poems. The proliferation of introductions to an already well-known artist and poet (not even Wordsworth is as frequently quoted, and reproductions of Blake's work appear everywhere, often in the most improbable places) seems to me to inhibit a proper appreciation and understanding of his work—precisely because it necessitates the sorts of short-cuts and assumptions of authority to which I've been objecting.

Roehampton Institute ZACHARY LEADER

VIRGINIA WOOLF

The Novels of Virginia Woolf. By HERMIONE LEE. Methuen, 1977; boards £5.50, paper £2.95.

Hermione Lee declares her intention at the start: not to write about Bloomsbury or lesbianism but about Virginia Woolf's nine novels 'in the hope of turning attention back from the life to the fictional work'. Nevertheless she quotes a good deal from Quentin Bell's *Life*, comments a fair amount on the ethos of Bloomsbury and uses *A Writer's Diary* extensively to show what Virginia Woolf was aiming at and what she felt about her own work. Whether we judge this opportunist or wisely eclectic, it does ensure that the novels are considered as a developing life-work, a series of attempts, in Miss Lee's words, 'to find a way of expressing life (or truth, or reality; the terms are frequently interchangeable) in art'. This has the disadvantage of sometimes leaving the terms of discussion too much in the novelist's hands but it has the advantage of letting Miss Lee make intelligent and sympathetic discriminations between successes and relative failures.

The pattern which Miss Lee discerns is persuasive; all the novels find their place in it and though she may emphasize she does not seem to me to distort. Much which will find its place in the later works, she says, is already present

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in *The Voyage Out*—the satire, the 'disdain for commonplace minds', the importance of Rachel's 'peculiar states of impersonality'. Her conclusion—which can also stand as an example of her ability to write both shrewdly and amusingly—is '*The Voyage Out* does not have an integrated structure; it moves about in a hazy and ramshackle manner, wishing away its own plot in the interests of its central argument, and then, as if guiltily, returning itself to people and things'. *Night and Day*, though more committed to the comic and the daily, resembles its predecessor in that both 'explore the possibilities for individual happiness within a restrictive society, and suggest that such happiness can be achieved only by going beyond relationships to more impersonal areas of existence'. Throughout her book Miss Lee uses 'impersonal' to refer to that state of mind to which so many of Virginia Woolf's sensitive characters aspire. What she is referring to is indubitably important, but the terminology is unfortunate; it sets up the opposition: personal = relationships, jobs, politics; impersonal = private moods, fleeting images, yearnings for meaning. But the latter are very personal; Mrs Ramsay never feels so much her own person as when she shrinks to being a wedge-shaped core of darkness, and it is often the world of society which depersonalizes. We sympathize with Miss Lee in her search for a useable term to express those states which—most strikingly in *The Waves*—are seen as most authentic by Virginia Woolf; a less careful writer would probably have plumped for 'mystical' and we must be glad that she does not, but 'impersonal' sometimes blurs the issue.

It is with *Jacob's Room* that Virginia Woolf makes a big step forward and it is, above all, a technical step; 'The form of *Jacob's Room is* the subject: an alternative to the false reality of the biography of fact'. Miss Lee analyses the prose whose manipulation is the key to this alternative, showing how the narrative floats in and out of characters and in and out of the narrator in a 'flexible interchange of voices', so that we feel convinced that 'the technique of *Jacob's Room* is necessary to the expression of Virginia Woolf's beliefs in the shadowiness of character and the elusiveness of relationships'. But she thinks that Virginia Woolf was right to suspect that she had failed to 'enclose

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the human heart'; the novel is too epistemological, so that its chief value is to open the way for the next two novels—'the struggle for knowledge, an end in itself in *Jacob's Room*, provides the groundwork for the consideration, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, of personalities at work'.

Miss Lee emphasizes Virginia Woolf's 'fascinated dislike' of high society and her declared satirical aim in *Mrs. Dalloway*. It is not hard to show the satirical nature of much—Hugh Whitbread and his fountain pen, Lady Bruton and her lunch, Sir William Bradshaw and his son at Eton. But Miss Lee claims as satire, too, Clarissa's feelings about her clothes and servants and about the grief of women whose sons have been killed in the war so that their line dies out; indeed, she characterizes Clarissa's party as 'hollow, trivial and corrupt'. Set against this—against the clocks which, like Bradshaw, 'counselled submission, upheld authority, and pointed out in chorus the supreme advantages of a sense of proportion'—is 'inner fluidity', 'an intense moment of consciousness' when Clarissa encounters Septimus Warren Smith's death. But Virginia Woolf's technical method and, one must assume, her own conflict of feelings about high society (she does after all flirt heavily with it in *Orlando*), mean that she can draw the images which express the moments of intense inner experience only from the very social life which she is often satirizing. This is responsible for much of the strength of the book, our sense that Clarissa's situation is so precarious that we forgive her sillinesses and vanities and even see her party, complete with Prime Minister, as a brave gesture in the face of death. But it is also responsible for a precariousness of tone which often leaves us stranded between incompatible responses.

To the Lighthouse is, for Miss Lee, the best of the novels, triumphing because the technical method stemming from *Jacob's Room* unites with what is in many ways a realistic and ironic story of family life. She is particularly good in her discussion of the fairy-tale, mythological associations which play around Mrs Ramsay; she teases out their significance without hardening them into a system which might fossilise the texture of the novel. She is excellent, too, where many critics are not, in showing the triumph of Mr Ramsay and his values. I can only regret that in an

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appreciation which praises so justly the significance of the real world she appears to share Mrs Ramsay's and Virginia Woolf's unawareness that, of all physically and emotionally succulent dishes, a *bœuf en daube* is least in danger of being overdone.

But, having shown the moments of revelation enmeshed with daily life, Virginia Woolf's impulse was to move on in search of some essence which would free the novel from the material. After the frolic of *Orlando* comes *The Waves*, the most abstract of her works. *A Writer's Diary* makes her aim clear: 'Waste, deadness, come from the inclusion of things that don't belong to the moment; this appalling narrative business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner. It is false, unreal, merely conventional'. Miss Lee's judgement on the disadvantages of this aim is firm: 'In thus disallowing the emphasis on relationships which was an important part of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* in favour of an emphasis on the essences of personality, Virginia Woolf deprives herself of some of her most powerful qualities'. Yes, but there is more to it than this; Virginia Woolf is not merely neglecting some of her talents; she is committing herself to a conception of people which cannot but be distorting. Miss Lee comments on the contempt for shopkeepers and the like manifested so disagreeably by Neville and Bernard, their apparent unawareness that other people might have perceptions of value, but this is only the most striking manifestation of a separation of essence from substance which inevitably makes all the characters seem, intermittently, psychotically self-regarding.

We know that *The Years* probably cost its author more suffering than any other of her books and it is tempting to suggest that this was because so much of its substance resists dematerialization. In struggling free from the oppressions of Victorian family life her characters must have beliefs, ideas, reasons for their repugnance and their rebellion, yet Virginia Woolf is sure that the novel must have no truck with opinions. Miss Lee points to 'the unease we feel at reading a political and historical novel which continually shies away from the factual'. The unease comes most, I think, from a recognition that the technique is distorting the characters. One of the most striking but also

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typical examples of this is the description in the 1891 section of Eleanor's attendance at a committee meeting; we are never told what the committee meeting is about, Eleanor is never shown thinking about the issues involved, though the obvious assumption is that its purpose is to do good to the poor. The account ends with ludicrous abruptness: 'She pulled herself together and gave him her opinion. She had an opinion—a very definite opinion. She cleared her throat and began'. The effect of this is not merely to assert that Virginia Woolf has no interest in the issues; it is also to make us feel, whether Virginia Woolf desires this or not—and I do not think that she wants us to despise Eleanor—, that Eleanor herself has no interest, that she is concerned only with a conception of herself as a member of a committee. It is an unwanted triumph of 'life-style' over life.

Of the last novel Miss Lee says: 'In *Between the Acts* Virginia Woolf returns to the methods which suit her. By contrast with *The Years*, her last novel is lyrical, carefully patterned and highly controlled. But its range, paradoxically, is broader'. It is also, she says, 'a book *about* speech, considering the history of a people as created and sustained by the spoken word, and adducing its present decay through the state of language'. She is right to point out the resemblances between Virginia Woolf's preoccupations and those of T. S. Eliot at this time. Certainly the characters no longer struggle to free themselves from history; often the threat of the coming war thrusts them back to a sense of continuity and enduring rurality which, as Miss Lee points out, Virginia Woolf so much enjoyed in those threatened years at Monk's House. But, surprisingly, if the dancers of East Coker come into our minds, so does Puck of Pook's Hill. And, just as there is always something a trifle factitious about Kipling's Sussex, so there is about Pointz Hall. Alas, Virginia Woolf seems to me to have rejected the oppressive solidity of Victorianism, the enemy in so many of her books, to embrace at last a pageant of English history. It is a comical, ironical embrace with multifarious reservations and mockery of the pageant designer, but an embrace nevertheless.

To emphasise what is unsatisfactory in the last novels

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rather than, like Miss Lee, to praise them for what is praiseworthy, must seem ungenerous and certainly, knowing the agonies which accompanied their writing, unkind. But it is necessary because, as Miss Lee says in her Introduction, 'no other English novelist of the period combined the theoretical analysis of the requirements for the modern novel with a continuing attempt, in every new work, to match her vision of reality with its appropriate form'. The implications of this judgement are two fold: we cannot with such an exploratory writer be content with enjoying her best books and ignoring the less satisfactory, and, if Virginia Woolf is taken as a type of the modernist novelist, then the relationship between her principles and her achievement is part of a bigger debate about the nature of modernism. What is this relationship? Miss Lee, though armed for the task of relating them, rather surprisingly refuses to perform it. Immediately before the passage which I have just quoted she says: 'None of her novels has the stature or scope of Proust or of Conrad, of Joyce's *Ulysses* or of Lawrence's *The Rainbow*. She is, with Forster, in the second rank of twentieth-century novelists. Her imaginative territory is strictly demarcated by her social environment, her intellectual inheritance, her mental instability and her sexual reserve'. It is reasonable to expect that she will demonstrate these limitations within the books, but in fact she hardly reverts to the criticisms.

If we compare the successes and the failures and the half-successes, it becomes clear that the real weaknesses are best defined not as limitations of experience or personality but as conceptual muddles—even though, of course, these muddles doubtless derive from personal feelings. The basic muddle is made explicit in the the essay on 'Modern Fiction' which we all use to illustrate Virginia Woolf's aims. Miss Lee quotes it at some length, making good use of it to indicate the relationship between technique and vision, though also making very sensible reservations about its adequacy either as a general guide to fiction or as a comprehensive description of what is most valuable in the novels, She is right to say that the essay needs to be seen in its historical context; there is not much point in objecting that the argument does not cover the cases of George

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Eliot and Stendhal (though it is possible to regret the extent to which the polemic led to much thoughtless underrating of Arnold Bennett). But it is equally important to see that, though an impressionistic use of an impressionistic passage may help to direct attention to what Virginia Woolf is after, nevertheless the famous metaphors incorporate a fallacy. 'From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old . . . Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness.' This is so fine a counterblast to inert convention that it takes a moment's thought to see that it is the mind that shapes and orders, imposing its patterns on the innumerable atoms in terms of values. To plot, to comment, to moralise is to admit this. To suggest that the patterns emerge involuntarily is to smuggle in judgements of value while the reader is looking the other way—or, sometimes, I think, to find they have been smuggled in while the writer is looking the other way. This may seem too obvious now to need saying and certainly we must sympathize with a writer whose periodical essays are cited in argument half a century later as if they were Holy Writ. But the very frequency with which this passage is quoted is indicative not only of its congruence with Virginia Woolf's practice, but also with judgements about her achievement and with widely shared assumptions about the nature of modernism.

Eschewing opinions, ideas, plots, explanations, and seeking essences, Virginia Woolf reveals her preferences and her associations primarily through the images which constitute the consciousnesses of her characters and of that authorial persona who, with much use of 'one' and of the present participle, surfaces from time to time within the flow of perception. At its best this is piercingly effective, bringing us, it seems, totally within Mrs Ramsay's mind and showing how that mind has been formed by the whole of her life and her society, and at the same time directing our feelings about her. But the method has two disadvan-

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tages. The blurring of distinction between the perceptions of the characters and those of their creator often gives the impression that Virginia Woolf cannot separate them from herself enough to focus on them. This is why we can never be sure how far Mrs Dalloway is being satirized; our doubt is not a matter of changing responses to a person but an uncertainty about what exactly is being said. The more damaging disadvantage, however, comes from the fact that, deliberately having no truck with opinions, Virginia Woolf is not obliged to confront the opinions implied by the images and the associations of the characters. That weirdly snobbish effect of parts of *The Waves*, the apparent lack of any sense that those outside the magic circle could be human, could hardly have passed any conscious scrutiny.

If one agrees with Miss Lee that *To the Lighthouse* is her best work, then this must result from its avowedly autobiographical nature. There is less blurring of Virginia Woolf's mind with those of her characters; this is particularly true, as Miss Lee well says, of the treatment of Mr Ramsay: 'In a novel which criticizes and mocks but finally finds admirable Mr Ramsay's bleak drama of endurance, the consolations offered for death are based on the real Mr Ramsay's principles'. Moreover, the images which furnish her characters' minds are grounded in a more physically realised world and one for which she feels a greater depth of commitment—house, furniture, garden, boat. We feel less that they have been chosen to express the characters and more that the characters have been formed by the experience which yields them. The search for inner essence continually comes up against the hard, unyielding, formative experience of relationship, the sense that other people exist.

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DOUGLAS HEWITT

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ENGLISH PLAYS

English Drama: Forms and Development. Edited by MARIE AXTON and RAYMOND WILLIAMS. Cambridge University Press, 1977; £7.50.

The title of *English Drama: Forms and Development* promises a study which should be both authoritative and exhaustive; and Raymond Williams appears to endorse the promises with his editorial declaration that the book's 'chapters range from medieval drama through all the centuries of English drama down to our own'. But the titles of the different 'chapters' begin to sabotage this claim. The Tudor Interlude is the earliest form to be discussed; and this is scarcely 'medieval'. 'Waiting for Prospero' appears to announce Beckett's play, but this seems to be the sole representative of 'our own' times. More disturbingly, the emphasis is on the undeniably minor. Kyd and Marlowe, Congreve, Sheridan, and Shaw—these authors are not to be found, even by inference, in the chapter headings, and Shakespeare is merely grafted on to Beckett. Ben Jonson's is the biggest name—from a theatrical point of view: the author of *Samson Agonistes* does not owe his fame to box-office success. Professor Williams not only misleads readers about the content of the book, he also claims more than is honest for its form. The word 'chapters' implies a coherence and continuity of argument that is neither suggested nor intended in the ten essays by various hands which Marie Axton and Mr Williams have collected together. The essays should not be read sequentially (as I read them) but considered, each for itself, in whatever order best suits the individual reader's taste.

Medieval folk play was most commonly attached to official religious ceremonies, and the English Reformation doubtless destroyed much of the homely, boisterous disguisings beloved of the people, along with the Church's valued possessions. Richard Axton rescues some of the remnants from further oblivion by identifying them for what they are in the Tudor Interlude. The eponymous hero of *Youth* (*c* 1515) is revealed as a hero of folk tale, as well as a morris dancer, when his self-introductory speech with its 'formulaic detail coupling leaf and ale, body gesture and hazel stick', is correctly identified:

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My name is Youth I tell the
I florysh as the vinetre . . .
My hearre is royall and bushed thicke
My body plyaunt as a hasel styck . . .
My cheste bigge as a tunne
My legges be full lighte for to runne
To hoppe and daunce and make mery.

In *The Nature of the Four Elements* (*c* 1517) John Rastell uses 'folk' language to characterize Ignorance, whilst the giant Tediousness in Redford's *Wit and Science* (*c* 1530–40) utters the popular 'folk' threat to decapitate the prostrate body of Wit. Yet despite the (grossly exaggerated) realism of the 'folk' episodes and characters, naturalistic representation of a complete action was a late development on the English stage. The earliest occurrence appears to be in *Calisto and Melebea*, printed by John Rastell *c* 1529 and based on a Spanish novel *La Celestina*. 'In the right dramatic climate', Mr Axton affirms such a play 'could have revolutionised English drama overnight.' The import of this claim is by no means clear. The 'dramatic climate' was wrong (apparently) because other dramatic forms were dominant; there was no realistic secular drama to absorb *La Celestina*'s influence; and the English (or perhaps only their dramatists?) had a 'preoccupation with morality and reformation'. Had things been otherwise, they would certainly have been different.

Marie Axton writes on 'The Tudor mask and Elizabethan court drama', describing the ways in which 'the inner circle at court celebrated its personal and public triumphs and defeats' in entertainments which few members of the audience would fully understand. She drops a tantalising hint, but refuses to pursue further the line of inquiry suggested by the 1587 Holinshed index entry for 'a mask with intended mischeefe'. This might well be the key to the ominous overtones of the masque in revenge tragedy:

A masque is treason's licence, that build upon;
'Tis murder's best face when a vizard's on.
(*The Revenger's Tragedy*, V, i, 181–2)

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There is more substance in Leo Salingar's essay 'Comic form in Ben Johnson: Volpone and the philosopher's stone', which rightly diagnoses the cause of the disappointment that is often the final reaction to Jonson's plays: 'he takes himself too seriously; there is no proportion between the intellectual power exerted and the triviality or the merely schematic significance of the characters'. *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* are exceptional, and the major concern of the essay is to demonstrate that alchemy is the unifying symbol not only of *The Alchemist*, where it is 'declared', but also of *Volpone*, where it is 'latent'. The two plays are compared in theme and structure with the *Plutus* of Aristophanes, where Chremylus lets it be known that the Wealth-god is lodging with him; the result is that neighbours and strangers alike crowd to his house, as they do to Volpone's bedroom and Subtle's furnace. In all three plays, dreams of rejuvenation and sexual licence are linked with gold which, as Mosca assures Corbaccio, is 'true physick . . . your sacred medicine, No talke of *opiates*, to this great *elixir*'. Close analysis of the language of *Volpone* reveals its alchemical content, all the more potent because not immediately apparent. Mr Salingar, it seems to me, offers incidentally a refutation of T. S. Eliot's verdict that Jonson's writing is, though not superficial, 'of the surface'.

In *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon listed alchemy among the 'arts' and 'sciences' most likely to prove deceitful, 'for the facility of credit which is yielded' to them. Jonson summarized the relevant passage in *Discoveries*, and Mr Salingar suggests that it was this passage that gave the 'crystallising touch' to *Volpone*. Jonson was no more ready than Bacon to reject alchemy completely, and his complex, ambivalent response produced the rich vitality of his two great plays.

When the Stuarts succeeded the Tudors on the English throne, it was to be expected that the traditional English history play, quiescent during the closing years of the sixteenth century, would once again show its vitality. The eventful reigns and charismatic figures of Henry VIII and Elizabeth were for the first time available to the dramatists, who made them the subjects of such plays as *When You See Me You Know Me* (Samuel Rowley, 1604) and *The*

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Whore of Babylon (Thomas Dekker, 1606). But Anne Barton examines the body of history plays written after 1603 and pronounces it to be, on the whole, lifeless. In 'He that plays the king' she suggests that the fleshly presence of James I could have been an inhibiting factor, causing writers to despair of ever again being able to 'invest historical English kings with majesty and significance'. Because of this, nostalgia became the only honourable emotion, and Mrs Barton finds this in its simplest form in Massinger's *The Emperor of the East* (*c* 1631), where Pulcheria, elder sister to the emperor, and regent of Constantinople, 'surely evokes the memory of Elizabeth'. I find this acceptable, the more so because Massinger himself seems to direct the attention when he makes Paulinus say that in Pulcheria '*Astrea* once more liues vpon the earth' (I, i, 77). I am not convinced, however, by the argument that Shakespeare is being nostalgic in *Macbeth* and contrasting, by means of the word-picture of Edward the Confessor, 'an older, sacramental kind of kingship with something more brisk and modern'—i.e. Malcolm. Edward's healing power attaches, by association, to Malcolm, who is termed 'the medicine of the sickly weal' (V, iii, 27) and contrasted throughout Act V with *another* doctor, one who cannot 'purge [Scotland] to a sound and pristine health' (V, iv, 52), and who confesses his impotence in the significant words 'More needs she the divine than the physician' (V, i, 71).

In Ford's *Perkin Warbeck* and Massinger's *Believe As You List* Mrs Barton finds a brief revival of the traditional history play—but with an important difference. The pattern that Shakespeare established in *Richard II* and *King John* is continued: in each of the two Stuart plays king-figures are contrasted, one being 'amoral and unglamorous', and the other possessed of what Malcolm called 'the king-becoming graces'. What has changed is the position of the figures: the man of grace is now the pretender to the throne, whilst the politician is the secure occupant. The comparison of the two plays is worthwhile, but Mrs Barton appears to attach little importance to the fact that both were subjected to official censorship. The Stationers' Register entry for *Perkin Warbeck* (February 1634) notes that the printer is 'observing the Caution in the License'; and

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Believe As You List was first refused by Sir Henry Herbert in 1630 'because itt did contain dangerous matter'. These are reminders that the Stuart kings, particularly Charles I, were by no means indifferent to what was being shown in their theatres; indeed, Charles himself read the manuscript of one of Massinger's plays and wrote against a certain speech 'This is too insolent, and to bee changed'. Despite the fact that the 'dangerous matter' in *Believe As You List* was 'the deposing of Sebastian king of Portgual, by Philip the [Second]', and the re-writing consisted partly of overlaying the Spanish names with classical ones, Mrs Barton admits the play—rightly, I think—into the canon of the English history play. But she ought to be consistent, and open the door equally to those works, several of them by Massinger, in which a historical or political concern is removed from its actual setting and transplanted abroad, or in which a real-life figure masquerades in romantic dress. It has been convincingly argued by S. R. Gardiner (in *The Contemporary Review*, August 1876) that James I furnished a model for the peace-loving Roberto in *The Maid of Honour* (1621–2), whilst Charles appears as the hopeful young prince in *The Great Duke of Florence* (1627). The royal favourite, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, may perhaps appear in *The Maid of Honour* as Fulgentio, one who 'In the time of trussing a point . . can vndoe Or make a man' (I, i, 32–3). It could be countered that this trait is generic to the favourite, rather than specific to Buckingham; however, the description of Gisco in *The Bondman* cannot be anything but a personal attack:

> *Gisco*'s their Admirall,
> And tis our happinesse: a rawe young fellow,
> One neuer traind in Armes . . .
> . . . a steele Helmet
> Made horrid with a glorious Plume, will cracke
> His womans necke. I, i, 48ff.

The character insulted under the name of Gisco is quite unlike his counterpart in Massinger's source, and he never in fact appears, or is even mentioned again, in the play. But George Villiers was appointed Admiral of the Fleet in 1619, only a few years before *The Bondman* (*c* 1623) was written.

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Mrs Barton claims that the English history play, as a dramatic form, 'withered away after 1603'. My reading of the plays which she herself admits into this category, and of other plays with equal right of entry, is contrary: I would argue that Stuart dramatists moulded the form to accommodate their various interests—from the nostalgic to the satiric—so that the period saw a triumphant regeneration of the genre.

With Mary Ann Radzinowicz's study of *Samson Agonistes* in the light of seventeenth-century psychopathology, we seem to have moved from drama without words (in the folk play and the court disguisings) to words without drama. We know that Milton constructed his poem in accordance with his classically derived theories of the nature and effect of tragedy, where decorum is 'the grand master peece to be observ'd'. Dr Radzinowicz argues that Milton's understanding of 'catharsis' relates him to contemporary students of the human emotions: in the preface to *Samson Agonistes* he glosses Aristotle's definitions with the explanation that tragedy should 'temper and reduce [the passions] to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated'. As a result, the argument continues, we have a 'medicinable tragedy', whose protagonist is understood and explained with the knowledge of current views of melancholy, and whose structure imitates the therapeutic handling of a disturbed mind. The theme of the play is 'the difficult, tragic but life-affirming possibility of human change' and its effect (or perhaps we should say intention) is 'the alteration of the sensibility of the audience'. Dr Radzinowicz does not believe, however, that Milton derived his insight into Samson's psychology from the medical and scientific treatises available to him; instead, his reading of other poets and dramatists reinforced an 'intuitive understanding of the human heart'. She quotes at length from Spenser and Cowley passages whch are clearly seminal, but does not ignore *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

'Other Nations bestow the name of Opera only on such Plays whereof every word is sung . . . experience hath taught us that our English genius will not rellish that perpetual Singing'. Richard Luckett quotes this anonymous

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view from *The Gentleman's Journal* for January 1692 in his clear, factual account of 'Exotick but rational entertainments: the English dramatick operas'. His title is a version of Dr Johnson's dismissal of the Italian opera as 'an exotick and irrational entertainment', which had aroused a degree of antipathy from its first introduction into England—not so much for being musical as by its use of a foreign language on the English stage. English writers of musical dramas in the late seventeenth century chose to follow French rather than Italian models—although occasionally scholars such as James Rassineau were aware that 'The *Opera's* [*sic*] we derive from the *French*, they from the *Italian*' (*Musical Dictionary*, 1740).

The increasing use of music in the Jacobean and Caroline theatre led inevitably to the development of musical drama: *The Tempest* points straight to *The Siege of Rhodes*. But critics deplored the extravagant (and expensive) fantasies. Hogarth's engraving *Masquerades and Operas*, which is used on the dust-jacket of *English Drama*, shows a costerwoman pushing her barrow through the throngs that crowd for admission to Heidegger's Masquerade and *Harlequin Dr. Faustus*; the barrow is heaped with the classics of English dramatic literature—Shakespeare, Jonson, Dryden, and Congreve—and the coster's cry is 'Waste paper for Shops'.

John Gay commands comparatively few specialists, and whilst most readers will be familiar with *The Beggar's Opera*, there will not be many who can identify *The What D'Ye Call It*. But Howard Erskine-Hill should make converts with his paper on 'The significance of Gay's drama', which is outstanding amongst the papers in this collection for the wit and elegance of its style, as appropriate to the subject-matter as Gay's own language was suited to his characters—although without the mockery, of course.

Opening his discussion with *The Mohocke* (1712), Dr Erskine-Hill makes a nice distinction between the burlesque of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* and the mock-epic of Gay's piece, which 'enters with verve into the vein it mocks'. In the essay, rather less than two pages of exposition were enough to tempt me to search for the play, and to guide my reading. Gay (? deliberately) recalls Shakespeare in his

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handling of the Watch: Peter Cloudy and his company of Starlight, Frost, Windy, Moonshine and Bleak are the direct descendants of Dogberry and Verges, although multiplication of the force (it seems to me) has led to dilution of the comedy. In his next play, *The Wife of Bath* (1713), Gay takes his characters from Chaucer, insisting that the men and women of the fifteenth century were no more innocent than their eighteenth-century counterparts: 'They knew the World as well as You and I'. With their poet-pilgrim, the characters are lodged in an inn on the road to Canterbury, and there enjoy the intrigues of Restoration comedy. With one case of mistaken identity, Gay stretches the convention to its limits: Doggrell thinks that he has enjoyed a liaison with Myrtilla, but 'it was the Wife of Bath disguised as a nun'. *The What D'Ye Call It* is highly sophicated farce, which describes itself as *'Tragi-Comi-Pastoral'* and which provokes and reconciles a variety of responses. When Kitty bids farewell to her (garden) rake, 'Companion of my Cares', the couplet form and our previous experience of burlesque prepare us for laughter:

> 'Tis to thy Help I owe this Hat and Gown;
> On thee I've lean'd, forgetful of my work,
> While *Tom* gaz'd on me, propt upon his Fork.
> Farewel, farewel; for all thy Task is o'er.
>
> II, viii, 6–9

Yet the pastoral mode that has been generated is so pervasive that the expected laughter does not come; instead 'rake, hat, gown and fork are taken up by the emotive pastoral vein to which they delicately lend substance'. I think it would be proper to add, though, that Kitty's farewell is punctuated by the 'Chorus of Sighs and Groans', who came onto the stage with the rest of the *dramatis personae* and now dutifully lament 'Ah—O!—sure never was the like before!', which to my mind somewhat disturbs the fragile equilibrium.

All Gay's minor works point ahead, in their mixing of dramatic forms, to *The Beggars' Opera* (1728) where 'the prose of familiar corruption' is set against 'the lyric of high intensity or tenderness', each validating the other. After

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the *Opera* Gay began to move towards a more plainly moral form of drama, a direction clearly signalled by the 1730 revision of *The Wife of Bath* in which the character of Chaucer lost his medieval habit and became Sir Harry Gauntlet. But even in these last works Gay was writing 'with the understanding of a person who cannot relate truth and falsity in a single coherent picture of society'.

Dr Erskine-Hill's enthusiasm for Gay is infectious; his well-researched and clearly ordered essay stands in direct contrast with the one that follows it, Gillian Beer's work on '"Coming Wonders": uses of theatre in Victorian novels', which seems to have been written for the express purpose of contributing to this volume. A patchwork of expected references takes the place of argument to demonstrate that some Victorian novelists used the idea of the theatre, and also the techniques of drama, to reveal 'areas of human needs and behaviour' which might otherwise prove intractable.

John Northam admits at the start of 'Waiting for Prospero' that the collocation of two plays as dissimilar as *The Tempest* and *Waiting for Godot* 'may well appear an exercise in misplaced ingenuity'. His commentary stresses the contrasts between the plays, arriving at the conclusion that 'Beckett's world is, in every way, a reduction of Shakespeare's', Prospero has vanished, along with Ferdinand and Miranda; left behind are Ariel—transformed into Lucky and inextricably bound to Pozzo, who is 'Caliban turned modern aristocrat, selfish, brutal, without any sense of social or moral responsibility'. *Rosmersholm* and *Ghost Sonata* are further adduced to show the changes that divert and crack, rend and deracinate the unity and married calm of Shakespeare's celebration. In Ibsen's play 'a great crack begins to split the unity of Shakespeare's world', and *Ghost Sonata* 'is as it were the photographic negative of Shakespeare's picture of life'.

At the end of his essay Professor Northam concedes that the four plays he has chosen to discuss 'are distinguishable in form', but he insists that 'such differences should not conceal the connections between them'. On Margate Sands.

Finally, Mr Williams adds his own contribution, 'Social environment and theatrical environment: the case of

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English naturalism'. He describes something of the Victorians' attempts at greater spectacle in their theatre, recognizing that the development of technical resources was a movement not towards but away from realism—which has always been the case, in fact, certainly since the Blackfriars' Playhouse acquired its flying equipment, if not before then. In the nineteenth century theatre audiences changed in constitution and grew in size. Melodrama was the first choice for dramatic entertainment, but it is generally agreed that by 1867 (the date of Robertson's *Caste*) English naturalism had established itself in the theatre. Defining this as 'a comedy of manners with a consciously social topic', Mr Williams suggests an earlier date than that of *Caste*, which is supplied by Bulwer Lytton's *Money* in 1840. In Robertson's work, however, Mr Williams finds 'naturalism in its most technical sense: that of the "life-like" stage'. After Robertson, 'Society drama' took the stage and held it, with strongly emotional plays posing socially relevant questions, until the first decade of the twentieth century.

In this essay Mr Williams plausibly identifies a dramatic style arising out of social conditions and theatrical resources; but he makes no judgements. He leaves the reader to accept *Caste* and *Money*, along with *Hindle Wakes* and *Heartbreak House*, as of equal merit, differing only in whether they are early or late products of an interaction between theatres and audiences. In some respect this is what they are; but the composition of the Blackfriars' audience, the machinery in the playhouse roof, and the seventeenth-century vogue for tragi-comedy do not add up to *Cymbeline*. In the Introduction to *English Drama: Forms and Development* Mr Williams lists four 'significant features' of 'Cambridge English': its correlation of literature and social history; its enquiry into the relations between imaginative writing and philosophical thinking; the study of dramatic forms and their conditions of performance; and its emphasis on 'practical criticism'. His account of English naturalism would satisfy the examiners with respect to the first three of these; but the last, asking the overwhelming question, 'Is it good?' is ignored. This neglect will surprise all students of literary criticism, and

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even alarm some of them, since English studies at Cambridge in the twentieth century have been most renowned for their insistence on the primacy of 'value judgements'. The names of I. A. Richards, F. R. Leavis, and William Empson are synonymous at once with 'Cambridge English' and 'practical criticism'.

But whilst these three have often been the most conspicuous, they have not been without their equals; and this book is intended to honour another Cambridge scholar whose achievement is just as great. The truly remarkable work in the collection is the Bibliography—or, rather, what that bears witness to: the published works of Professor M. C. Bradbrook. It begins with the essay that won the Harness Prize at Cambridge in 1931; the following year it was published as *Elizabethan Stage Conditions* by Cambridge University Press—and was re-issued (although the scholar's typical modesty refrains from mentioning the fact) as recently as 1968. Also in 1932, *Scrutiny* published Miss Bradbrook's 'Notes on the style of Mrs Woolf', which we can now see as an early indicator of the breadth of interest that, although concentrating on the Elizabethans, refused to be confined to the seventeenth century: Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Marvell have always had to share Professor Bradbrook's attention with Malory, Coleridge, Ibsen, Conrad, Lowry—the list seems endless; and we all hope for its continuance.

University of Sheffield ROMA GILL

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ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

Vol. XXIX April 1979 No. 2

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ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL FOUNDED BY F. W. BATESON

Vol. XXIX April 1979 No. 2

F. W. Bateson Memorial Lecture

IT IS PROPOSED that a lecture should be given annually in Oxford in memory of F. W. Bateson if sufficient funds are forthcoming to endow it. The lecture would be given at his own college through the hospitality of the President and Fellows of Corpus Christi, and it would subsequently be printed in *Essays in Criticism* so that it may be available to a wider audience. Corpus Christi College has kindly agreed to administer the lectureship fund of which the undersigned have undertaken to be trustees.

We very much hope that those readers of *E in C* throughout the world who have valued F. W. Bateson's work will feel that the lecture would be an appropriate way both of honouring him and of contributing further to the subject to which he devoted his life. Donations, large or small, should be sent to

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Editorial Commentary: F.W.B. and *E in C*

F.W.B. was the only begetter of *E in C*. In our last number we printed Wallace Robson's tribute to the man and in the pages that follow we review some aspects of his work and also include a previously unpublished piece. As our check-list shows, F. W. Bateson was a man to whom the standard academic opener 'What is your field?' would have made little sense. The great labour of his earlier life was the massively inclusive *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature,* which was the best part of a decade in the making. At the time of his death last October he had just completed a new edition of *The School for Scandal*—a job he set about with his usual vigour despite lukewarm appreciation of the play's merits—and he thus returned to the eighteenth-century drama that he had begun his career by studying. But he was also working on *The Canterbury Tales* for his Annotated English Poets series, an edition which he clearly hoped would put a sizeable cat among the medievalist pigeons (see his 'Could Chaucer Spell?', *E in C*, January, 1975). The characteristically provocative paper, printed below, on Owen and Donald Davie (whom he sponsored in the 1978 Oxford Professorship of Poetry election) dates from 1977. Much of the distinction and authority of Bateson as the editor of a periodical was due to the ease and energy with which he moved over the remarkable width of terrain that these latter-day activities suggest. For him, English literature from Chaucer to the present day really was a continuum.

Academic journals are generally faceless but—despite F.W.B.'s remarks about the studied conventionality of the first number (see *E in C*, January, 1972)—it soon became clear that *Essays in Criticism* was being run by someone with strong ideas about what such a journal ought to contain if it was to live up to its Arnoldian title. Like most of its kind, *E in C* has always accepted unsolicited contributions but, in Bateson's hands, it never gave the impres-

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sion of feebly relying on whatever had simply drifted in with the tide. The 'Contributions to a Dictionary of Critical Terms', 'Organs of Critical Opinion', 'English in the University' and other such series that were a marked feature of *E in C*'s earlier years indicate the vigour of his editorial initiatives. F.W.B.'s achievement as an editor was to give *E in C* a positive role without delivering it over to faction. As he explained in the last piece he completed (which appeared in our October 1978 number), the journal was both inspired by the example of *Scrutiny* and determined to avoid the claustrophobic effects of Leavisian orthodoxy. Both the eclecticism of *E in C* and its editorial energy had their source in the personality of its founder. Articles were not made to toe an official line because F.W.B. saw no reason to suppose that he and his associates had a monopoly of righteousness; by the same token, contributors were to expect to have their arguments taken up rather than received with torpid acquiescence. Hence the establishment of 'The Critical Forum' and the editor's own genially dissenting interventions.

F.W.B.'s editorial practice reflected this combination of confidence and catholicity. Prospective contributors knew where they were, or where they weren't; even the aspirant author who was once told that his article was 'on the verge of being acceptable' was also given the reasons for this uneasy station. F.W.B. was not one to shelter behind polite editorial formulas or printed rejection slips. An article not only had to take the given problem one stage further; it had also to be free from dogma and well-written. Freddy Bateson's own style—and who among modern critics has such an instinct for the ways in which the energies and directness of common speech can be used in academic argument without any touch of intellectual vulgarity?—provided a constant reminder that the common pursuit does not require an esoteric idiom. (For his definition of good English see *E in C*, January, 1966). Those who wanted to be read had, it is not too much to say, a moral duty to be readable. Articles which had something to offer but which put it badly were rewritten, condensed, and knocked into shape. To see the typescript of an inexperienced or diffuse writer as revised by Bateson was to have an object

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lesson in how to make rough places plain. The collaborative nature of his editing did much to give *E in C* a tone that was distinctive without being uniform. His editorial kindnesses—especially perhaps to those many correspondents outside Britain whose contributions he specially enjoyed accepting (if they were up to it)—were constant, and made large but totally ungrudged demands on his time.

Editing *E in C* was (and is) a time-consuming business partly because of Freddy Bateson's decision to publish it himself. Taking *E in C* out of the hands of Blackwell's was a courageous and, in the eyes of those in the trade, foolhardy step, but it came off and it was one of the achievements of which F.W.B. was most proud. He both respected and mocked the official Oxford periodical, the *Review of English Studies*, but it pleased him especially that *E in C*, run by amateurs as a cottage industry, was able to hold its own with a journal backed by the might of the Oxford University Press. (That *E in C* did so was due in no small measure to the work of Mrs Jan Bateson who established the systems which the magazine still uses today.) *E in C* was (in the phrase that continues to appear on our inside front cover) 'an English journal with an Oxford bias', and its durability and solvency in F.W.B.'s hands was a demonstration, in which he took a legitimate pleasure, of the vitality and value of 'Oxford English' as he construed it.

E in C was one of the weapons through which (in his more sanguine moments) its founder hoped to change the face of English studies, and a campaign with such an objective was highly congenial to such an inherently dissident personality as Freddy Bateson's, not afraid of grandiose intellectual ambitions but savingly sceptical about his own, or anybody's, capacity to achieve them. He was not a man who minded treading on other people's toes in the pursuit of truth—it was one of the charms of meetings of the Oxford English Faculty in his day to see this higher tactlessness in action—and he quite expected to have his kibes galled in return. What made his editorship of this journal at once so vigorous and so hospitable was his combination of the combative and the open mind. Disputatiousness and generosity were both natural to him and their co-existence gave *E in C* its particular character. The escape from

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personality recommended by T. S. Eliot (in another context) was quite alien to him; on the contrary, it was the personality that gave his work as a scholar-critic its unique *élan* and human appeal. It was the personality that was always to be felt, directly or indirectly, in the pages of *Essays in Criticism*, which was, and remains, his journal.

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The Literary Theories of F. W. Bateson

RENÉ WELLEK

IT MUST have been sometime early in 1935, when I was teaching English Literature at Charles University in Prague, that my superior, Professor Vilém Mathesius, the founder and President of the Prague Linguistic Circle and the editor of its quarterly, *Slovo a slovesnost* (Word and Literature), gave me a little book, *English Poetry and the English Language,* for review. The review, published in the first volume of the new journal (1935, pp. 229–31), hails the book as 'formulating [I translate freely from the Czech] obviously quite independently, without the slightest knowledge of Russian formalism and other parallel movements on the Continent, a theory of literary history which is surprisingly similar. In a sketchy survey of the history of English literature he shows how this history would look according to his scheme. Bateson's book is another most interesting symptom of the crisis of methods in literary history and a new confirmation that the way out of the crisis (or at least one of the ways out) lies in close collaboration between literary history and linguistics. England—a conservative country also in literary historiography—comes to its methodological ferment apparently later than the rest of Europe. The picture which, in a rather too simplifying manner, Bateson draws of the state of English literary history, corresponds to the picture of German or Czech literary history during the pre-war domination of positivism. According to Bateson the writing of literary history in the sense of Taine or Brandes has practically died out. "The typical scholar", he says in the Preface, "is today not strictly speaking a historian at all but an antiquary".'

I then go on quoting or paraphrasing the contents of the book and conclude by expressing 'my sympathy with its main theme: the close relationship between literary history and linguistics, the way the problem of literary historiography is seen clearly as the general problem of evolution, the way the difference between poetry and prose and the wholeness of a literary work of art is stated: all ideas with which formalism or structuralism is in full agree-

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ment. Also the objections to positivism in literary history, to philosophizing and sociologizing historiography, are convincing, though we must not forget that one can look at literature otherwise than as a history of the art of poetry. A history of literature from a philosophical point of view is entirely possible if we are conscious that we are neglecting the aesthetic function of literature. Bateson's basic thesis, the absolute subordination of the history of poetry to the history of language and the view that social influences can affect literature only through the language, seems to me, however, debatable. Bateson quite rightly refuses to see a meaningless series of irrational changes in the autonomous evolution of literature. He draws from this insight the conclusion that the evolution of literature is necessarily subordinated to the causal series of changes in the language. The evolution of literature in isolation is, however, not irrational either, but is just such a continuous organic series as is the series of changes in the language. Thus the necessity of an artificial distance between poetry and, say, the series of economic phenomena or the development of philosophical ideas, disappears. Nothing is isolated and poetry—though it has its own evolution—is subject to direct interference by all other cultural phenomena. Poetry itself affects language, philosophy, and so on, a circumstance that Bateson surprisingly ignores. In short, Bateson has not understood the main idea of Hegelian dialectic, which would have prevented such a one-sided and artificial construct. Also the view that poetry is static is doubtful and derives from a mistaken understanding of the concept of the whole. There is a dynamic whole, a successive pattern (*Sukzessivgestalt*), a dialectical concept perfectly comprehensible if we only think of music, in which a temporal flow of sounds simultaneously establishes a clear pattern or whole. Bateson lacks theoretical, philosophical training and is hampered by his obviously total ignorance of analogous efforts on the Continent from which he could learn methods and theories. But just this independence and the somewhat headlong radicalism of his "Experiment in Literary History" adds to its value as a sign of the times. It reminds us of the almost mystical fact of convergence which is usually explained by the foggy term "the spirit of

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the age". It is after all quite comprehensible, if we realize that a similar state of problems leads necessarily to similar solutions, that certain questions which have everywhere become urgent, require similar answers.'

I have translated this review written forty-four years ago, wondering at its brashness and conceit (a collective conceit convinced of the inferiority of the empirical tradition) and also at the hopes there expressed for an internal evolutionary history of poetry, a hope that I have since treated with proper scepticism (see my 'Fall of Literary History' in *Geschichte: Ereignis und Erzählung*, ed. R. Kosseleck and W. Stempel [Munich, 1973], also in *Proceedings of the VIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, Bordeaux, 1970* [Stuttgart, 1975]). But the main point of my criticism, that the complete subordination of the history of literature to that of language and the idea that social influences affect poetry only through language, seems to me still well taken. Bateson himself changed his mind. In the epilogue to the third edition (1972) he grants that 'the hypothesis was perhaps too tidy' (p. 99). Actually many of his later arguments about the relation between literary history and linguistics amount to an almost complete repudiation of the early thesis. Linguistics, he argues in a paper contributed to a volume published on the occasion of my sixty-fifth birthday, *The Disciplines of Criticism* (ed. Peter Demetz, Thomas M. Greene, and Lowry Nelson, Jr. [New Haven, 1968]), is irrelevant to literary criticism.

In the meantime Bateson wrote another book on the history of English poetry, *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (1950), which propounded a very different, equally striking theory. Long before the vogue of German *Rezeptionsästhetik* and similar reflections on the 'fictive' or 'implied' reader, Bateson stated boldly that 'in the poet-reader *relationship* lies the essence of poetry' and that 'without the reader's co-operation the poem might just as well not exist' (p. 66). The reader thus 'must be the poet's *alter ego*' (p. 64). Bateson draws radical consequences from this insight. The reader or rather the ideal reader is 'one of the more intelligent of the poet's original readers' (p. 73). 'The ultimate criterion . . . is what the poet meant to his

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contemporaries' (p. 72), and 'the meaning of a poem is the meaning that it had for the ideal representative of those contemporaries of the poet to whom the poem, implicitly or explicitly, was originally addressed' (p. 76). Bateson thus resolutely embraces a view I call 'historical reconstructionism', but he differs from other advocates of historicism who ask us to identify with the intentions of the author by proposing the audiences of the different periods as the standards of interpretation and evaluation. He does so by distinguishing the schools of English poetry (mainly on traditional stylistic grounds) and relating them to the then dominant social class. He lists six periods—lawyer's feudalism, the local democracy of yeomanry, the centralized absolutism of the Prince's servants, the oligarchy of the landed interests, and the present-day managerial state (p. 113)—and selects texts to illustrate this sequence. Bateson assumes all the time that 'poetry is the particular social order at its point of maximum consciousness' (p. 261) and that the 'historical-sociological approach alone provides the critic with a factual structure to which he can attach his perceptions and generalizations' (p. 258). Poetry (and Bateson includes the drama and the novel) embodies, typifies, and somehow summarizes the society of its time. It is 'simply the expression in language of the sense of social solidarity' (p. 86). Wittily though arbitrarily, Bateson selects for example four heroines to represent four stages of English society. Alison, in Chaucer's 'Miller's Tale', is regarded as 'the embodiment of the yeoman's philosophy of life, much as Shakespeare's Cleopatra embodies the Renaissance idea, Millamant the Restoration's, and Becky Sharp the nineteenth century's' (p. 134). Detailed interpretations of poems by Wyatt, Milton, Waller, Gray, Keats, Wordsworth, and Tennyson fortify the scheme. It denies what would be J. S. Mill's definition of poetry: 'poetry is of the nature of soliloquy', 'poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude' (*Dissertations and Discussions*, 2nd ed. [1867], *I*, 71–72). For Bateson the opposite is true. For example Wordsworth's later poems failed 'because they were not addressed to anybody in particular' (p. 211): Bateson believes that 'purely private emotion and reflection cannot get into poetry' (p. 79), a

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view that seems to deny the efforts of much romantic and symbolist poetry to express the inexpressible, the most individual, the 'interiority' of man. Consistently Bateson almost completely ignores the adversary relationship of many poets to their society, the whole problem of 'alienation', and rather accepts the contrary romantic dictum: the Grimms' *das Volk dichtet* (*E in C*, XIX, p. 4). He rejects any inspiration theory (p. 14), does not believe in genius, considers hypnotic poetry undesirable (p. 29), and thinks that verbal music and 'pure poetry' will not stand up to close examination (p. 52). This collectivist historicism is clearly akin to Marxism though not in any orthodox version: the determining cause is rather in a specific audience than in the economic base of the society, and there is no prediction of the future and no prescription of a specific style.

Bateson had to defend his view against F. R. Leavis, who argued that reconstruction is impossible and undesirable and that the critic cannot help judging by present-day criteria. This has been an issue in the exchange between Bateson and Leavis dating back to Leavis's review of *English Poetry and the English Language* (*Scrutiny*, IV, pp. 96–100, reprinted in *The Importance of Scrutiny*, ed. E. Bentley [New York, 1948]). Leavis then stated that a history of English poetry 'will be undertaken because the works of certain poets are judged to be of lasting value—a value in the present' (p. 13). Bateson in his 'Comment' understood this to mean that Leavis 'will not allow that there can be any such thing as literary history' (p. 16), and proposed then to distinguish between two types of propositions, one literary-historical which says that 'A derives from B' and one critical which can be reduced to 'A is better than B' or even just 'A is good' (p. 16). Leavis had little trouble in demolishing this difference between supposed fact and opinion. 'Dependence', derivation, is not a fact. It requires 'critical judgments of a most complex and delicate order'. 'Mr. Bateson', Leavis argues, 'can have access to works he proposes to deal with—to his most essential facts—only if he is sufficiently a critic' (p. 21). In *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (1950) Bateson granted that there is no 'hard-and-fast boundary' between

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literary history and criticism but turned the tables on Leavis by suggesting that 'a strong case can be made for incorporating "criticism" in "history" ' (p. 252), a logical conclusion if all standards of judgment must be deduced from the historical situation. But Bateson was not satisfied with this claim. Later (*E in C*, XIV, pp. 12–13) he explicitly recanted. 'I have only recently come to recognise', he says, that Leavis 'was in general right'. Bateson speaks of this even as 'a medicine that took a good many years to work its cure' (*E in C*, XIV, p. 19). He seems to have abandoned the historistic position or rather sensibly concluded that 'literary criticism and literary scholarship are complementary disciplines' (*The Scholar-Critic* [1972], p. vii). Once he stated the contrast in new terms. Literary history is concerned with the art of literature, which is 'historically determined, a mode of communication between the particular poet and his original readers or auditors that was right or wrong', whereas criticism is concerned with ' "life", which though it may evolve under pressure from a language and a society, is essentially a total continuum, a mirror of the ways of life, constantly available to all of us' (*E in C*, XXIII, p. 178). Bateson seems here to endorse Leavis's declaration that 'the judgments the literary critic is concerned with are judgments about life' (*Lectures in America* [1969], p. 23), with the odd consequence that art is relegated to history. I cannot believe that Bateson could have seen this and could have seriously defended the position that criticism is only about life. Rather he accepted the distinction derived from E. D. Hirsch (itself derived from Gottlob Frege's distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*) between 'meaning' and 'significance', 'meaning' being historically verifiable in the past, what Bateson calls also the 'Then-meaning' (*The Scholar-Critic*, p. 188), whereas 'significance' is contemporary relevance, implying a value judgment for the present. (See Bateson's review of Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation*, in *E in C*, XVIII, pp. 337–42.) Bateson is convinced that it is possible and valuable to recapture the original meaning of a work of art. He accepts the criterion of authorial 'intention' and, in many contexts, rejects the 'intentional fallacy' formulated by W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, which Bateson, I think,

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misinterprets to 'forbid any attention to an author's other writings, his biography or the social order to which he belonged', an interdiction that Bateson labeled 'obvious nonsense' (*Essays in Critical Dissent* [1972], p. xv). Bateson produces examples which show the relevance of biography even for an interpretation of Chaucer's 'Merchant's Tale' (*ECD*, pp. 88–91) and for an understanding of Housman's poems (*ECD*, pp. 100–14), in order to demonstrate 'the fallacy of the Intentional Fallacy' (*ECD*, p. 114). I need only allude to Bateson's *Wordsworth: A Re-interpretation* (1954) to show how strongly the private conflicts of a poet (which, however, have 'a representative quality', p. 119) determined, in Bateson's eye, the nature and the value of the poetry. Bateson, in advocating the recovery of the original meaning, makes distinctions, at least, as to the desirability of communicating it to the readers of our time. He was a strong defender of modernization in spelling; he ridiculed the idea that we should, if we were consistently 'historistic', 'recite Blake and Keats with a Cockney accent' (*ECD*, p. 27), but he strongly endorsed (what Wimsatt would never have denied) that we need to recapture the original meaning of words, arguing, at length, against Empson's unhistorical, fanciful readings. Bateson constantly looked for constraints on the arbitrariness of interpretation in the literary tradition, in the conventions of genres, and ultimately in intellectual and social contexts. 'As a result of the series of limitations imposed upon word-meanings, and word-associations at the various contextual levels, a final meaning begins to emerge. It can be called the correct meaning, the object as in itself it really is' (*E in C*, III, p. 18). This is the formulation in the programmatic essay 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', where language and the original language is considered the object of critical concern, though 'the final criterion of correctness is the awareness of the appropriate context' (p. 19). In a note my and Austin Warren's *Theory of Literature* is criticized: 'The central defect is the failure to realize the crucial role played by language in the literary object' (p. 23n.).

Surprisingly, Bateson abandoned this emphasis on the continuity between language and literature as he dis-

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covered an argument against the importance of linguistics for literature. Most clearly in the paper 'Linguistics and Literary Criticism', contributed to *Disciplines of Criticism* (1968), Bateson modified his usual historicism by recognizing that 'to become accessible to us critically, the literature of the past must in fact be translatable into the present tense' (p. 7) and that a degree of 'anti-historicism is the price that has to be paid for the continuing vitality of an English literary tradition' (p. 8). He now uses the diagram that Saussure in his *Cours de linguistique générale* (5th ed. [Paris, 1955], p. 28) calls 'le circuit de la parole' to show that language is only a remote originating factor in critical response. The composition of a work of literature starts with an idea in the author's head, is then verbalized and transmitted by physical sounds to the ear of the receiver, who, in inverted order, transmits the physical sounds to be mentalized. Bateson appeals to Lessing's *Laokoön*: 'in the moment of illusion we cease to be conscious of the means—that is, the words—which [the poet] employs for this purpose' (p. 14). The argument is frankly psychological. Linguistics, whether historical or descriptive, breaks up the continuous process of reception and thus 'can contribute little to the critical study of literature' (p. 16). This new emphasis on the process of response, which is necessarily individual and subjective, yielded the main argument against the importance of linguistics for criticism in the exchange with Roger Fowler (reprinted in Fowler, ed., *The Languages of Literature* [1971]. Linguistics is or claims to be a value-free descriptive science and thus has nothing to do with criticism. Criticism can be concerned only with style, which is conceived of not merely as a 'superimposition upon speech' (*Disciplines of Criticism*, p. 10), but as an 'inner vision' (*Essays in Critical Dissent*, p. 29) that precedes and transcends the linguistic origins. 'It is the area of transcendence that is the primary concern of the scholar-critic' (*The Scholar-Critic*, p. 79): 'the ultimate function of style is to induce the symbolic condition in which words seem to assume the property of human things, "significant" human situations or problems' (*S-C*, p. 89). Earlier Bateson had always focussed on poetry: he even fairly recently gave a lecture on 'The Novel's Original Sin' in which he

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states his conviction that the novel is 'an inferior art-form' (*ECD*, p. 242). Its convention is 'doing without conventions —one that minimizes the aesthetic distance between the world of art and the world of things' (p. 247). It 'deliberately confuses, or at least juxtaposes, two orders of reality: the world of art and the world of things' (p. 243) a feature one would have expected to appeal to Bateson's usual dislike of aestheticism. But in the essay on Style (*S-C*, pp. 78–100) the very fact that in the novel (and in prose, generally) words do not attract attention to themselves, is considered an argument against the crucial role of words in literature. Bateson, to my mind, is right in doubting the critical value of much linguistic stylistics, and he is right, as I have also argued (e.g. in 'Stylistics, Poetics, and Criticism' in *Discriminations* [1970]), that literary criticism deals with strata of the work of art inaccessible to linguistic tools, but he must surely be mistaken in divorcing style from language so completely. I can sympathize with his resistance to what I call 'linguistic imperialism' and the inflated claims for the new methods of linguistic analysis as relevant to literary study, but one cannot deny that the literary work is a verbal artifact, a 'linguistic consruct' (as Bateson had said in earlier years himself, e.g. *E in C*, VII, p. 474).

Bateson strongly objected to what he considered the implication of the term 'artifact'. He appeals to the undoubted fact that a work of literary art is assessible only as a temporal process and not as a structure existing in space: a conception he sees exemplified in the titles of such books as Cleanth Brooks's *Well-Wrought Urn* and W. K. Wimsatt's *Verbal Icon*. He argues that the parallel between a literary work and a speech-act, *parole* in Saussure's sense, 'overturns the formalist position' (*ECD*, p. 11), or, more elaborately, that 'to abstract from this human and temporal process 'the best words in the best order' after they have left the author and *before* they reach the auditor, and freeze them into an artificial spatial immobility is to treat *parole* as if it were *langue*. . . . This indeed, in the final analysis, is the Formalist Fallacy' (*ECD*, pp. 11–12). But these Formalists (and Bateson adds at times my own analysis of structure as a complex of stratified norms)

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would presumably answer that they recognize the temporal process of responding (reading or hearing) but do not think that succession is incompatible with structure, *Gestalt*. As I said in my old review of *English Language and English Poetry*, there is something that can be called *Sukzessivgestalt*, of which music yields the most obvious examples. Long ago Joseph Frank argued that the modern novel makes a conscious effort to achieve 'spatial form' (in *The Sewanee Review, 53* [1945]), and more recently he has defended his view well in *Critical Inquiry* (*5* [1978]). The point of my phenomenological analysis in my chapter 'The Mode of Existence of a Literary Work of Art' in *Theory of Literature* (1948; but the chapter dates back to an older paper, 'The Theory of Literary History', in *Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague, 6* [1936]) is precisely to define the ontological status of this elusive dynamic structure existing somehow between author and reader. Bateson misunderstands the phenomenological method when he considers the 'ontological status a synonym for "aesthetic" ' (*E in C*, XIX, p. 428). This is contradicted by many statements of mine that the literary work must be thought of as an assembly of values, social, political, intellectual, moral, and what not, with the proviso that the dominance of the aesthetic function makes it a *literary* work of art. The ontological status cannot be identified with the aesthetic function. Defining the literary work of art as neither real (physical) nor mental nor ideal but a system of intersubjective norms, achieves what must be considered a first step in any theory of a discipline: a definition of its object. Bateson is right, however, on one point in his criticism when he says that 'to exclude statues from being works of art is obvious nonsense' (*E in C*, XIX, p. 428). My phrasing obscures the fact that I speak (as the context shows) only of the *literary* work of art, which as a language construct differs from a real, physical object such as a statue made of marble or bronze. Bateson, however, accepts my attempt to define the work of art as a system of intersubjective norms. He has his difficulties with the term 'norms', which he thinks of as 'a standard, a pattern, or type' (*S-C*, p. 54), though they are conceived of in much more general terms as 'structures of determination', a term from Husserl which

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in literature would include any constraints, however implied, conventions, traditions, and assumptions imposed by the text. The formula attempts to put theoretical limits on interpretation, surely one of the most urgent problems of literary study today, when total wilfulness has been running riot, not only in France. Bateson has the same aim in mind. My appeal to 'collective ideology' corresponds to his 'intersubjective relationship' and 'the controls against misuse provided by the relevant context' (*E in C*, XIX, p. 430). But Bateson holds fast to what seems to me basically a communication theory and refuses to see the work of art hypostatized in any way: he fears aestheticism and cannot agree with the organic view of form (form understood as *eidos*, as totality and not as exterior husk). 'The organic metaphor cannot be taken very seriously' (*S-C*, p. 61), he says, rightly I think, sensing its dangers if the parallel to living organisms is pushed too far. The 'formalist' W. K. Wimsatt has seen this, too (see 'Organic Form: Some Questions about a Metaphor' in *Organic Form: The Life of an Idea*, ed. George Rousseau [1972], reprinted in *Day of the Leopards* [1976]). Bateson remained in the empirical and finally psychological tradition. He constantly thinks of the inner processes in the mind of author and reader: the author's imagination, for which he likes to use the Coleridgean term 'esemplastic' (an attempt to translate into Greek the German *Einbildungskraft*, misunderstood or punned on as *In-eins-Bildung*), and the reader's response, which aims at empathy and finally identification. But Bateson, who can speak of 'the incorporation of the poem in one's own consciousness' (*English Poetry*, p. 60), tries to socialize this process by making the reader the spokesman of a group just as the poet is the representative of his time and nation. Bateson insists on the judicial function of criticism, and denies that interpretation can be divorced from appreciation: 'Value is also fact' (*S-C*, 25). Judicial criticism must establish a canon, must distinguish between the good and the bad, presumably on aesthetic grounds. For Bateson, however, this judgment presupposes the power to discriminate 'between what is good and what is less good in ordinary human behaviour' (*S-C*, p. 66) and that requires some answer to the question of 'what constitues a Good Society'

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(*S-C*, p. 16). Bateson is also a moralist and a social critic. One sees this in his disagreements with the two most eminent English critics of his time. T. S. Eliot, whom he calls 'the best critic since Matthew Arnold', is chided not only for 'dogmatism and recklessness of assertion' (*ECD*, p. 133) but also for 'unsavoury class consciousness' and 'sheer snobbery' in one of Bateson's last essays on 'Criticism's Lost Leader' (in *The Literary Criticism of T. S. Eliot*, ed. D. Newton-De Molina [1977]). Leavis, whose 'moral fervour' and 'total incorruptibility' Bateson admires, is criticized for his 'reluctance to realize the democratic basis of his collaborative group'. 'Dr. Leavis was too much of a "leader" and too little of a "chairman" ' (*E in C*, XIV, p. 20). Bateson thought of *Essays in Criticism* as a more democratic *Scrutiny*: he had like Arnold—and he called himself frankly an Arnoldian (*E. in C*, XX, p. 1)—the highest hopes not only for poetry but also for criticism. Not only does he expect criticism to increase our understanding of literature but also that 'the trained reader will understand contemporary social processes better than his neighbours' (*E in C*, III, pp. 153, 29). Bateson made many concrete proposals for a reform of the teaching of English, hoping that 'the English School is destined to become the educational centre of the university in the English-speaking democracies' (*E in C*, IX, p. 265). I cannot share these high hopes, remaining, as I do unrepentantly, a theorist and historian, but Bateson has at all points unerringly put his finger on the central issues, has asked the right questions and given answers, not always consistent or convincing to my mind, but always independent, honest answers which display the three Arnoldian virtues of 'intellectual clarity, spiritual integrity and social conscience' (*E in C*, III, p. 2), which he hoped to foster with *Essays in Criticism*. My topic has precluded attention to his manifold activities as bibliographer, textual critic, editor, biographer, historian of trends, movements and genres, and, most of all, as interpreter of specific poems. Others will discuss these things, and all will have to come to the conclusion that F. W. Bateson, though often a maverick, was a representative figure in English criticism of this century.

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F. W. Bateson, Pope, and Editing

JOHN BARNARD

TO SINGLE OUT F. W. Bateson's work on Pope does scant justice to his editorial contribution to English studies during his working life as a scholar. It is not simply that it ignores his influence as a teacher, critic and examplar for several generations of Oxford students, later to become teachers in schools and universities themselves, but his editorial achievement is far broader than such a focus admits. The most obvious omission is the compilation of the original *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* (1940). We have become so accustomed to using this and its successor, the *New Cambridge Bibliography* (edited by George Watson) that it is difficult to imagine the study of English without its help. The difficulties of enumerative bibliography on this scale are immense: Bateson had little or nothing on which to build; he had to devise a workable system of recording the information as well as a usable manner of publishing it; he had to find, and then to supervise, the large number of scholars needed to undertake the various sections—and had no doubt to contend with the diplomatic problems of encouraging the more tardy contributors to finish work on time. The rightness of Bateson's original decisions is underlined by the fact that George Watson's revision is directly based on Bateson's original conception (and having updated a few of the entries for the *New Cambridge Bibliography* myself, I am aware of the careful and thorough work of the original contributors). Inevitably a work on the scale of the *Cambridge Bibliography*, breaking new ground, and done with remarkable speed, was uneven, but as a reference tool it was essential. In itself the bibliography is a sufficient monument for one man.

The editing of Pope must have been begun while Bateson was still at work on the *Cambridge Bibliography*: in the same year that his Twickenham edition of the *Epistles to Several Persons* (Vol. III, ii) appeared, he undertook a third kind of editing, that of a critical and scholarly journal. *Essays in Criticism* no doubt called for some of the

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qualities which had been invaluable in creating the bibliography—the ability to pick out the right contributors, and the tact, generosity, and encouragement needed on some occasions to bring the putative into the world of the actual. A third kind of editing appeared in his creation of the Longmans Annotated Poets, whose first volume, *Matthew Arnold* edited by Kenneth Allott, appeared in 1965, to be followed by other volumes, several the work of young Oxford scholars who had, in one way or another, come under Bateson's influence (John Carey, Alastair Fowler, Christopher Ricks, and Roger Lonsdale). The series' commitment to modernized spelling, its insistence that *all* the author's poetry should be printed, and the editorial principle that textual criticism should be allotted less space than contextual and lexical annotation (to the exclusion of critical opinion), exhibit a characteristic clarity of purpose and firmness of outline. Experience has modified the original formulation in some cases, and it never attained its aim of selling for a guinea, but the imaginative concept of the series, coupled with Bateson's scrupulous and indefatigable work, have meant that the Longmans Annotated Poets has established its own high standard (although as the succeeding General Editor I ought to declare an interest).

Looking at Bateson's editorial achievements as a whole it is characteristic that he should have given as much energy and time to creating an indispensable factual scholarly tool as to setting up a lively critical forum, or to the creation of a series of texts intended to make the fruits of modern scholarly research available to the student. What is remarkable is the continuity between his scholarly work and his critical concerns—the ability to perceive the importance of Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole* for literary theory and practice on the one hand, and the need to challenge what he termed Fredson Bowers's 'Bibliographical Fallacy' on the other. (Bateson's more important articles on textual and bibliographical matters, which mostly date from about the time he was planning the Longmans series, are brought together in the first section of *Essays in Critical Dissent*.) For Bateson literary scholarship, unless it was ultimately used

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to illuminate the words on the page, was pedantry. In a remarkable way he brought together the fierce commitment to literature evident in the work of his near-contemporary, F. R. Leavis, with the historical perspective of the Oxford English School of his time, and humanized both.

As a textual editor, F. W. Bateson's reputation must rest largely upon his Twickenham edition of Pope's *Epistles to Several Persons*. In fact, Bateson edited two books on Pope, the Twickenham text and the volume on Pope in the *Penguin Critical Anthologies* (1971, with N. A. Joukovsky). The former is a major contribution to the study of Pope, but since Bateson never wrote at length as a critic on Pope, the Penguin's inclusion of a version of a paper given to the Modern Language Association of America as the introduction to the post-1930 section of the anthology gives us the fullest published statement there is of his critical assessment of Pope.

It is therefore doubly unfortunate that the printed version of his lecture is abbreviated, and that the lecture itself was deliberately polemical. Bateson's target was the automatic assumption of Pope's greatness which he sensed among some American critics, particularly 'the Yale Formalists', and he described its title, 'Isn't Pope Overrated Now?', as 'deliberately provocative'. His own answer to the question—'Well, yes, perhaps a little'—is surprisingly mild given the vigorous side-swipes made at Pope in the development of his argument. What Bateson does is to re-state radical questions about Pope, hoping to deflate the solemnity of scholarly and critical commonplaces, which in time become evasions of the main issues: Is Pope a major or minor poet? Is Pope's technical mastery overrated? Are 'a certain verbal poverty and syntactic monotony . . . the signs of a certain inventive deficiency in Pope'? Does Pope lack a tragic sense? Is 'the commonplaceness of his mind' a liability? In other words, Bateson insists that after the scholarly and critical work typified by Sherburn, Empson, Leavis, Mack and the Twickenham edition itself, had successfully reinstated Pope as a significant and important poet for modern readers following nineteenth-century denigration of the man and his work, ought we not to return to the basic questions? Ought Pope not to

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be measured against other major English poets? It is characteristic of F. W. Bateson that his challenge is so framed as to irritate and annoy a specific audience. His evident pleasure in attacking a sacred cow goes hand in hand with the lively expression of partial dissent. Perhaps he takes on too many targets. It is a pity that in an attempt to allow intention and psychology back into Pope criticism (in defiance of the Intentional Fallacy of Wimsatt and Brooks) the lecture should end by claiming that 'Martha [Blount] was almost certainly Pope's mistress for some years' (a significant departure from his own earlier statement in the Twickenham—'It is not improbable that she was Pope's mistress'). The evidence in the letters and Spence is too slim and circumstantial to warrant Bateson's later confidence, and the facts we possess argue for no more than a deep and lasting relationship between Pope and Martha Blount. The lecturer's irreverence, preserved in cold print, allows his telling points to be ignored. Yet the undergraduate reader, an audience Bateson always had in mind, is more likely to take the wheat and leave the chaff than the Pope scholar, whose sensibilities and professional anger are more easily aroused by apparent flippancy. The several printings of F. W. Bateson's book on Wordsworth, which also has its questionable biographical speculations, are a testimony to what was a feature of his whole career as a teacher—the ability to stimulate a new generation of students to challenge and modify current orthodoxies. Taken as a whole, the Pope anthology is not only useful, but the liveliest and fullest account of the poet's reputation from 1711 to the present day available. My Critical Heritage volume ends in 1782, W. L. Macdonald's *Pope and his Critics* (1951) is dull and uncritical, while Amarasinghe's work (1962) covers only the early nineteenth century. By including some of Pope's own comments on his work, and by extracting brief passages from a wide variety of authors, Bateson and Joukovsky are able to give a catholic sense of the fluctuations of Pope's reputation, as well as a vigorous synopsis of the main tendencies of Pope criticism in this century. But Bateson's own choice of an extract from the introduction to his Twickenham edition indicates that it is this work which he saw as his

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most considerable and considered exploration of Pope's poetry.

Critical verve, a willingness to innovate, and the refusal to be intimidated by an author's classic status, always positive virtues in a critic, are qualities traditionally felt to be antipathetic to, even inconsistent with, the dull duties of an editor. F. W. Bateson's edition of Pope's *Epistles to Several Persons* possesses all three characteristics. Even the book's spine offers an immediate challenge. *Epistles to Several Persons* is a title embodying an editorial decision and implying a critical stance: the half-title and title page make the boldness apparent by including the traditional title within parentheses—*Epistles to Several Persons* (*Moral Essays*). 'Moral Essays', a description popularized by Warburton after Pope's death, gained an authority which has still not lost currency or indeed usefulness. The more grandiose title reflects Pope's intentions, which actively occupied his mind from 1729 to 1735, and were never entirely given up, of creating an '*Opus Magnum*', of which the *Essay on Man* would have been the introductory part serving as a scale for '*a general Map* of MAN' with the four epistles to Cobham, to a Lady, to Bathurst and to Burlington, forming no more than the first two books of the whole. In the event the plan lost impetus, though Pope was still thinking about the scheme in the last year of his life as he prepared the 'death-bed' edition of his works. How far the advertisement outlining the larger plan given in the opening pages of the rare 1744 edition is by Pope and how much of it is Warburton's is likely to remain a matter of dispute: the evidence is inconclusive. What is beyond dispute is that Warburton's activities sought to reveal the connections between the four epistles not merely through his commentary but by in effect rewriting the text where he saw fit, as well as firmly imposing the title 'Moral Essays'.

Bateson's new title, drawn from the half-title of the 'death-bed' edition, has the difficulty that 'Ethic epistles' was a term used by Pope to describe all of his epistolary poems, not simply these four. It also involves a critical interpretation of both these epistles and of Pope's creative work from 1735 onwards. It is not simply an attack upon

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Warburton (though it is that too), but assumes that Pope's career in the 1730s was 'progressively an *Imitatio Horatii*' (Reuben Brower), and that Pope's essential genius did not encompass the ability to build up large intellectual structures—Maynard Mack has said, 'What Pope was willing to call a "system of Ethics" in the *Essay on Man* indicates how the degree to which *l'esprit du système* was foreign to his temperament'. In this view, 'We add nothing to our enjoyment of Pope or to his knowledge of imaginative design, by imposing schemes of the kind that Dr. Warburton provided for the "Essay on Man" or the Moral Essays' (Reuben Brower).

Yet it is clear that Pope continued to brood over his larger scheme even when he no longer expected to complete it. Miriam Leranbaum's recent book on *Alexander Pope's 'Opus Magnum'* (1977) gives an invaluable analysis of the evidence for the importance of the concept in Pope's later years, and insists on the continuities between the four epistles—not surprisingly, she adopts the conservative title, somewhat cavalierly assuming general agreement ('what we now call the *Moral Essays*' (p. vi)). Certainly John Butt agreed: in the one volume Twickenham, which undoubtedly has a wider readership than the original hardback, he restored 'Moral Essays' in all its magisterial simplicity without further ado (making one wonder whether the title page of Bateson's volume represents an ingenious compromise between the individual and the general editors). Yet a critic whose reading of Pope emphasizes the Horatian mode of the later work will adopt either Bateson's title, or get round the difficulty by placing the four poems separately under 'Epistles' in the index (as do Maynard Mack in *The Garden and the City* and Howard Erskine-Hill in *The Social Milieu of Alexander Pope*). An editor, of course, has to make a choice, and Bateson's decision, based on bibliographical evidence *and* on his critical sense of Pope as poet, has an enviable intellectual boldness. The easy answer is always to maintain the *textus receptus*. Pope's own havering over the title reflects his own uncertainty, and suggests that there is no wholly satisfactory title available. In that context Bateson's break with a tradition deriving from Warburton had the great virtue of raising major

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critical issues—do these four poems really form a coherent group, and are the individual epistles satisfactory imaginative wholes?—in such a way that they could no longer be avoided.

The same interpenetration of scholarship and critical response appears in Bateson's handling of the text and commentary.[1] Challenging procedural and theoretical problems are posed by the textual history of the *Epistles to Several Persons*. Quite apart from the usual problems set by Pope's habits of continual revision, these four poems (like the *Essay on Criticism* and the *Essay on Man*) were in the process of being revised with the help of Warburton just before Pope's death, and the 'death bed' edition of 1744 contains not only frequent verbal revisions but also substantial transposition of passages in two of the *Epistles*. Should the verbal alterations made by Pope, along with the transpositions to which he gave authority by approving their publication, be retained? Earlier editors had agreed with Dr. Johnson's advice to Warton—'Whatever Warburton had done ought to be retained'. The 'death-bed' edition, which proves the closeness of the working relationship between the poet and his editor would, on the face of it, strengthen the traditional decision.

If the editor took the view, as Bateson came to, that Warburton's 'incrustations' were those of a self-important critic radically insensitive to literature, then it was possible to reject his alterations for the 1751 edition. Even so, strict obedience to Greg's dictum that an editor ought to follow the last extant authorial changes would mean adopting not just the verbal changes of the 'death-bed' text, but also its transpositions. It is over this principle that Bateson was later to take issue with Greg, having already broken with his rule in the course of editing the *Epistles*. Writing in 1961 he welcomed Greg's formidable authority for recognizing that editors must, in the last resort, make judgements ('It is impossible', Greg wrote, 'to exclude individual judgement from editorial procedure. . . . Uniformity of result [by the enforcement of arbitrary rules] at the hands of different editors is worth little if it means only uniformity in error . . .'). Bateson took the argument a stage further, and called into the question the assumption that when

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an author substitutes a later for an earlier authentic reading, the modern editor should always prefer the later reading, 'whether the editor himself considers it an improvement or not'. Bateson's conclusion was that each reading should be judged on its *literary* merits (' "Is this the best reading?" is simply a miniature form of "Is this a good work of literature?" '), asserting as a corollary that 'All criticism is necessarily eclectic' (*Essays in Critical Dissent*, pp. 33–35).

Stated as barely as this, with no qualifications at all, the argument is an invitation to uncontrolled eclecticism. In fact Bateson's treatment of the four *Epistles* assembles and evaluates the bibliographical and external evidence, and only when, in his opinion, *all other things are equal* does he take advantage of eclecticism. Thus Warburton's sublimely arrogant creation of a dialogue from the *Epistle to Bathurst* for the 'authorised' 1751 edition, an alteration which caused the Lord himself considerable chagrin, is rejected on the grounds that it stems from an 'improvement' which the legalistic Warburton thought allowable in terms of Pope's will (it involved no *verbal* changes of the text). But what about the transpositions in the epistles to Cobham (75 lines, a quarter of the whole are shifted) and to Bathurst (two transpositions together with the omission of lines 27–28 and the insertion of a couplet after line 202)? These occur in the 1744 edition, and have Pope's approval in the sense that he seems, from a letter to Warburton, to have adopted suggestions made by the latter, who wanted to regularize the argument of the poems. Yet as Elwin and Courthope noted (without doing anything about it) these shifts can result in nonsense (see their note to the *Epistle to Cobham*, line 37). In any case Warburton was trying to make the epistles into something they are not—a formal essay instead of an informal Horatian epistle. (Anyone who has not worked with Elwin and Courthope ought to go back to their text of these poems in order to see exactly what sort of a text existed before the Twickenham.)

Bateson's answer, to keep the verbal changes (with some exceptions) of the 'death-bed' edition, but to drop the transpositions on the grounds that Pope, ill and aging, unwisely and against his better poetic judgement, gave way

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to the over-bearing critic, now seems the inevitable one. Bateson's real answer to Greg was less than the proposition that the editor simply takes the best *poetic* reading, and more that the rule of following the last authorial revision depends on the particular circumstances. Bibliographical evidence, though essential and invaluable, is only one kind of relevant information in establishing a text. (The real reason for not following Keats's later alterations to the text of the *Eve of St. Agnes* would be not that it would produce an eclectic text, but that faced with censorious publishers and wishing to assert his experience of life, Keats betrayed his original inspiration.)

More ingenious, and less clearly justifiable, is Bateson's discovery and treatment of what he termed Overlooked Revisions. Finding that some of the alterations introduced in earlier editions were adopted in the 1744 text and others not, his analysis of the evidence provided by variants (including spelling and punctuation which go unrecorded in the Twickenham, since the editorial policy excluded such considerations) led to the conclusion that Pope had prepared the 'death bed' text by marking up copies of each poem which were made up of a mixture of pages taken from different editions. In other words, it was possible, and in Bateson's view likely, that Pope in preparing the final versions of these poems was working from texts which did not always include his most effective rewordings and alterations. 'Sometimes indeed we can be fairly sure that he had temporarily forgotten one or more of his earlier attempts to improve [an *Epistle*]. In such instances the onus of selection necessarily reverts to the editor.' The Overlooked Revision does indeed, in Bateson's words, raise 'a nice question of editorial policy'. But rather than resolving matters (as his reply to Greg might lead one to expect) by reference simply to the editor's literary judgement, Bateson adopted a compromise between 'mere eclecticism' and simply ignoring the problem set by this category of variants. The Twickenham text's middle way is 'to give *1744*'s revisions the priority, where they are unquestionably Pope's and not Warburton's, but to print an Overlooked Revision where *1744* merely reproduces the text of the first edition'.

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David Fairer suggests that it is inherently unlikely that a poet like Pope, who habitually revised in the search for perfection, could simply have forgotten an important revision, and Bateson's own description of the changes in *1735c* as 'new and sometimes brilliant readings' might seem to rebound on the editor's head: would a poet really forget 'brilliant' improvements? The problem is perhaps less dramatic. None of the changes seem to me brilliant, but most (though not all) are improvements. None of the Overlooked Revisions (unlike the question of the transpositions) seriously affects the *overall* meaning of the poem in question. Further, in preparing the one volume Twickenham text John Butt, who did not hesitate to alter Bateson's general title for the four epistles, only chose to revert to the 1744 reading on one occasion (line 212 of the *Epistle to a Lady*): otherwise he accepted a total of some fifteen or so departures from the copy text, and in doing so was more generous than necessary. The 1744 reading of the *Epistle to Cobham*, line 126, seems to me preferable to the earlier reading, as do one or two of those elsewhere (*Epistle to a Lady*, line 236, *Epistle to Bathurst*, line 265–6, *Epistle to Burlington*, line 59). But this is, of course, no satisfactory answer to the commonsense objection that poets, who above all care for verbal accuracy, do not forget their improvements. At least a partial answer to the latter objection is that in the particular year, 1735, in which Bateson argues that most of these improvements were made, more than sixty works by Pope were printed; Pope clearly worked on the final versions of his poems very much in terms of their appearance on the printed page (an eye poet at that stage rather than an ear poet?). Which of us would like to say we have the capacity to remember, some eight years after the event, corrections made in proof *in currente calamo*? Pope's constant alterations and revisions put him at risk in this respect. Is it, then, really *inherently unlikely* that Pope *could* have forgotten less than twenty minor changes? The real objection to the adoption of the Overlooked Revisions is that some do not seem to be improvements, and some seem to have been dropped by Pope in editions dating from the same year. Without a fuller bibiographical account of their transmission it is difficult to be wholly persuaded of their authority.

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Overall, Robert W. Rogers's assessment of the imperfect first edition seems to be the right one:

> Professor Bateson's ambitious undertaking calls . . . for great restraint and imagination, especially when he is willing to admit such a criterion as improvement in 'the poem's value as poetry'. In practice he has been more careful in departing from his copy-text than his theory implies. . . . The result is that modern readers have for the first time a text of the four poems that may be confidently regarded as Pope's, not Warburton's.

The only thing I would argue with in Roger's statement is that Bateson does not so much put forward a 'theory' as describe what he was driven to do by the combined logic of scholarly and critical evidence. And in dealing with the transpositions, which were the major changes made in 1744, the result was more to the good of Pope's text than would have been the case had he held slavishly to Greg's maxim.

As far as the commentary and introduction to the edition of *Epistles to Several Persons* are concerned, subsequent work, as is the fate for most if not all editors, means that some statements and conclusions need to be modified. Bateson's confident ascription to Hogarth of the engraving, variously known as 'Taste', 'The Man of Taste', or 'Burlington Gate', which appears as a frontispiece to his edition, is according to Paulson's monumental *catalogue raisonnée,* simply wrong (though it is possible that the engraving belongs to an anti-Burlington, and therefore anti-Pope, stance which must be connected with Hogarth). Miriam Leranbaum's book on Pope's *Opus Magnum,* with its careful re-interpretation of Pope's recorded comments on his grand plan would undoubtedly have affected both Bateson's and Maynard Mack's introductions to their volumes (and indeed Osborn's edition of Spence), though since her concern is in the end with a series of poems adding up to a whole which was never completed, it is unlikely that it could have modified the conclusions of either editor very deeply. Some of Bateson's commentary calls for further additions and changes. For instance, Howard Erskine-Hill's work clearly adds to Bateson's anno-

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tation, especially on the Man of Ross, as does Margaret Maison's recent article in the *Review of English Studies*, identifying Rufa, Silia, and Simplicius. Nevertheless, such work follows Bateson's insistence on searching out factual information beyond that supplied by Elwin and Courthope in order to substantiate the extent to which Pope's Muse increasingly stooped to truth. Yet it is striking that even Leranbaum reflects the general impression given by subsequent scholars when she speaks of her 'immense debt to the magnificent editorial work of Professors Mack and Bateson'.

Bateson's insistence on drawing critical conclusions from his scholarly work means that his introductory analysis of the poem is, despite the elegance and wit of his style, pugnacious. Many readers (of whom I am not one) find his dismissive atitude to the *Epistle to a Lady* wrong-headed, yet Paulson's convincing attempt to see the poem as a gallery of portraits structured on an *ut pictura poesis* analogy does not really offer a satisfactory answer to the twentieth-century reader who finds it wanting in articulation and coherence. On the other hand, the remarkable attack upon the *Epistle to Burlington* as a 'hotch-potch' seems to owe more to Bateson's editorial knowledge of the poem's composition: no doubt the *Epistle* is made up from fragments written at different periods, but the imaginative wholeness of the *Epistle* (in a sense testified to by Empson's comments on the Ceres passage which Bateson quotes with approval) shows Pope attaining an eloquent and structured entity precisely through a process of accretion and revision. Here (as when he emends 'heav'ns' of *1731a–36* and *1744–51* to *1739*'s 'heav'n' and comments, 'Many of Pope's lines have at least one "s" too many. See Tennyson's comment (*Memoir, By his Son*, 1897, II. 286)'), it is hard not to feel that a witty perversity, or too deep an involvement in the poem's textual history, has allowed Bateson's inwardness with the technical problems of editing to trespass upon critical assessment. (It is a curious irony that Bateson's evaluation of the *Epistle to Burlington* is actually less helpful to the modern student than Elwin and Courthope's account of the gardening background to the poem's structure: as Leranbaum argues, *pace* Bateson, Pope's 'gardening

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poem' was not unwritten, but is a reference to the *Epistle to Burlington*.)

But once the objections have been allowed for, the edition remains as a testament to Bateson's alliance of scholarship and criticism. A few years ago the combined forces of Kathleen Mahaffey and Maynard Mack made it seem that Bateson's conclusion that Timon's Villa was a composite portrait was as much taken in by political manœuvring as Pope's contemporaries: Timon's Villa, with some disguise, they argued, was an attack upon Walpole's Houghton. (Mack's scrupulous conclusion is as follows, '. . . nothing that we know seems to me to require us to believe that Timon has *no* application to Sir Robert Walpole, while certain things we know seem rather unmistakably to point towards such an application'.) As someone who found this a wholly attractive thesis, I must now admit that Bateson was righter than I, or for that matter Mack or Mahaffey. The portrait must be composite: Houghton may be in part a target, and Cannons was certainly *not* the main object of satire. Morris Brownell's recent assertion that Timon's Villa contains elements of Blenheim (*Alexander Pope & the Arts of Georgian England*), may seem only to make confusion worse confounded, yet it does not deny Bateson's insistence that Pope's target was a general one.

The great editorial strength of Bateson's identification of Pope's victims in the *Epistles* is his threefold discrimination between abstract names (sometimes drawing on the Latin root), invented names which pointed towards specific people, and real names. Bateson, followed in greater detail by Erskine-Hill, annotated as far as he could those people who were actually meant to be recognized, and argued that after the *Epistles to Several Persons* Pope more and more turned to naming names. Although his introduction ends with a wicked joke ('Veracity did not come easily to the *mens curva in corpore curvo*'), Bateson's is the essential point for later criticism—'In the *Epistles to Several Persons* we can trace the process of self-discipline, moral as well as technical, by which he eventually taught his Muse to stoop to Truth'. We are left with a question which is as much about the nature of topical satire as about Pope's achievement as a satirist.

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Reviewing the edition on 1 June 1951, the anonymous reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* wrote:

> Mr. Bateson is incapable of playing safe and avoiding controversy. Even to "the dull duty of an editor" he brings daring and freshness. Any dogmatic verdict on what he has done would be presumptuous at this point. . . . It is to be hoped that other scholars will accept his challenge and enter the lists.

Well over quarter of a century later the answer is that they have. F. W. Bateson's major editorial decision revealed the essentially Horatian structure of the *Epistles*, while his commentary not only corrected the anti-Pope bias of preceding editors, but established new lines of inquiry. Disagreement with some of his critical conclusions has been based on the poems which his work uncovered, two hundred years after Warburton's officiousness had obscured their outlines. The most fitting tribute to F. W. Bateson's role as a scholar, critic, and editor of Pope's poetry is the variety and wealth of subsequent work on the *Epistles*.

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NOTE

[1]Any assessment of Bateson's Twickenham edition of *Epistles to Several Persons* must be based on the enlarged and revised edition of 1961 rather than on its first edition. Valuable as that is, it was prepared 'under conditions of special difficulty in the spring of 1940': F. W. Bateson was immediately involved in the war effort, acting as statistical officer for the Buckinghamshire War Agricultural Executive Committee, where he remained until 1946. He could not re-check the holograph manuscripts and original editions scattered through various libraries before his volume in the Twickenham edition appeared in 1951. Robert W. Rogers in a full and, on balance, laudatory review in *Philological Quarterly* (vol. 31, 1952) pointed out several *lacunae* in the textual apparatus which were corrected in the second edition (with grateful acknowledgement). Further notes,

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both textual and otherwise, were added to that edition, the introduction and Preface were modified and these, together with the further addition of a General Note on the Text, made Bateson's approach to the text easier to follow in its detail. The new edition also adopts some of the Overlooked Revisions which had earlier been passed over. It is perhaps true that both editions might have benefitted from further textual information, but the edition had to conform to the series policy laid down by John Butt (whose first volume appeared in 1939), which excluded all manuscript readings and included 'only the readings rejected from the authorized versions', with the aim of concentrating on elucidation.

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F. W. Bateson: Scholar, Critic, and Scholar-Critic

VALENTINE CUNNINGHAM

FREDDY BATESON was a scholar who wanted also to be a critic, and whose consequently persistent reflections on the dialectic between fact and value, on the common rift between the 'pure scholar' and the 'pure critic',[1] on why neither the professorial dryasdust on the one hand nor *Scrutiny* on the other would do, brought to birth that most appealing, if sometimes ambivalent amalgam: the scholar-critic.

In his own case Bateson was clearly always afraid that his criticism lagged behind his scholarship, that as a scholar-critic he wasn't enough of a critic. 'Dr Leavis at his best is a much better literary critic than I am, but when it comes to scholarship I am perhaps the better man of the two—though I agree cheerfully that nothing I have contributed to literary history is equivalent in that sphere to his unique contribution to criticism.' That was in 1964.[2] In 1966, in a 'Postscript' to his earlier debate with Leavis over Bateson's essay 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time',[3] Bateson granted that he was 'a lesser man in an inferior English Faculty'.[4] 'The scholar-critic', he added in 1972, 'if he is to succeed in his profession, must generally speaking be more critic than scholar'.[5] In his last 'Editorial Postscript' he told us that he had only used the phrase about being a lesser man 'because I thought it would please Leavis', but he went on nonetheless to say that 'I suppose *E in C* is also the lesser journal' (than *Scrutiny*). What's more, he would again 'cast my vote for criticism, though I am less good at it than at history'.[6]

Humility aside, though, the first essential to the scholar-critic was, in Bateson's view, his scholarship. The 'scholar-critic must be a scholar, a researcher, *before* he can become a really competent critic. There are, therefore, almost no reputable "critic-scholars". . . .'[7] And so it was with Freddy Bateson. As he came over to the English School as an undergraduate out of the dictionaries, the footnotes, the

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dry linguistic exactitudes of Classics, so he started his critical career as 'a minor professional scholar', working for four bob an hour as 'general editor of the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*'.[8] His career began, then, as his *A Guide to English Literature* begins, with justifiable pride, in 1965 (an opening revised in the *Guide*'s second and third editions, 1967, 1976), with

> The most elaborate of the general bibliographies . . . *CBEL* . . . edited by F. W. Bateson (paradoxically, of Oxford), 5 vols., 1940, 1957. This lists every English author and book with any claim to literary distinction from Anglo-Saxon times to *c.* 1900. Semi-literary matter, such as political pamphlets, newspapers, travel books, schoolbooks, sermons and scientific treatises, is also included in considerable detail. There are long lists of books and articles *about* English literature in all its aspects down to *c.* 1935. . . .

After all which knowledge, of course, there was no forgiveness for mongerers of error. Bateson was as merciless as any New England puritan on readers and instructors who would 'put a fallacy upon' their own or their congregation's soul (see Perry Miller's *The New England Mind*, New York, 1939, 68). He had moiled arduously in the *apparatūs critici*, and his students had better go and do likewise:

> As far as I know, I was one of the few Oxford tutors who took careful notes of each undergraduate essay as it was read to him. And prominent among each set of notes there was almost always a list of its factual errors, which I found it convenient to point out and correct as soon as the essay had been read. . . . Once the last erroneous date, title or quotation had been corrected my tutee was often left limp and bewildered, and I could then sail in with my rival interpretation of the poem or poet. . . .[9]

The criteria laid down for contributors to the earliest *E in C* consisted not only of *constructiveness* and *social relevance,* but also *scholarly standards*: 'there must not be the "howlers" and the unawareness of what is already in print displayed by too many critics and reviewers today."[10] In other words 'The Sense of Fact' must come high among

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critical priorities. 'The Sense of Fact' became the title of the first chapter of *The Scholar-Critic*. And those guilty of 'critical *sottisiers*', whether 'eminent bores and charlatans' like Edmund Gosse, or too nodding academics like I. A. Richards or William Empson or C. S. Lewis or F. R. Leavis, or purveyors of 'pseudo-learning' like T. S. Eliot, would be smitten with Bateson's fearsomely wielded ass's jawbone of factuality. 'Desert Island Criticism' as he labelled the bad stuff in his 'The Function of Criticism', that is critical judgements of texts that ignored their contexts (contexts of all sorts), was simply an 'irresponsible' kind of criticism. 'The "sense of fact"—which is made the final *sine qua non* of the critic in "The Function of Criticism" of 1923—was one', Bateson snarled, 'that Eliot only acquired if at all in middle age.'[11]

Undoubtedly Bateson's own relish for facts, his desire to prove himself triumphantly right ('I was always so sure that I was right'[12]), his anxiety always to demonstrate his rightness ('the ultimate *raison d'être* of criticism within a modern mass society . . . is to be demonstrably *right*'[13]), could occasionally lead to an irritating parade of name and number. His lists cut ice in the *CBEL* and *A Guide to English Literature*, but not, perhaps, in his 'Schools of Poetry' chapter in *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction*. The statistical tables look duly impressive in his little Fabian book *Towards A Socialist Agriculture* (1946); the tables he compiled to prove he was right about the fallibility of Oxford Finals results were brought seriously into question.[14] And, of course, this deeply positivistic 'sense of fact' led him into his greatest critical blunder—his curious rejection of The Novel because of its allegedly bogus claim to be factual ('the untrue masquerading as the true!'; . . . 'it deliberately confuses, or at best juxtaposes, two orders of reality—the world of art and the world of things').[15]

But at his best—and I think particularly of *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction*, of the earlier parts of his *English Poetry and the English Language* (1934), and of the snappily wise 'inter-chapters' of *A Guide to English Literature*—he did demonstrate how a sense of the contextual fact was vital to a reading of literary texts. In fact, he proved again and again how critical 'judgment' depended on 'knowledge,

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and ever fresh knowledge' in the combination inspirited for him by his favourite and much-quoted passage from Arnold's own essay 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time': a passage 'that we scholar-critics need, I think, to ponder and re-ponder'.[16] That 'remarkable passage', he called it in 1953 in his own 'The Function of Criticism', a passage that 'has not, I think, received the attention it deserves'.[17] In token of which, perhaps, his quotations from it got increasingly fuller in time, reaching their fullest extent in *The Scholar-Critic* where it is (p. 5) 'the crucial passage . . . worth quoting . . . because it is often overlooked' (not overlooked at that stage, I fancy, among the readership of *E in C*, who'd never been allowed to forget it):

> The English critic of literature . . . must dwell much on foreign thought, and with particular heed on any part of it, which, while significant and fruitful in itself, is for any reason specially likely to escape him. Again, judging is often spoken of as the critic's one business, and so in some sense it is; but the judgement which almost insensibly forms itself in a fair and clear mind, along with fresh knowledge, is the valuable one; and thus knowledge, and ever fresh knowledge, must be the critic's great concern for himself. And it is by communicating fresh knowledge, and letting his own judgement pass along with it—but insensibly, and in the second place, not the first, as a sort of companion and clue, not as an abstract lawgiver—that the critic will generally do most good to his readers. Sometimes, no doubt, for the sake of establishing an author's place in literature, and his relation to a central standard (and if this is not done, how are we to get at our *best in the world*) criticism may have to deal with a subject-matter so familiar that fresh knowledge is out of the question, and then it must be all judgement: an enunciation and detailed application of principles. Here the great safeguard is never to let oneself become abstract, always to retain an intimate and lively consciousness of the truth of what one is saying, and, the moment this fails us, to be sure that something is wrong. Still, under all circumstances, this

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> mere judgement and application of principles is, in itself, not the most satisfactory work to the critic; like mathematics, it is tautological, and cannot well give us, like fresh learning, the sense of creative activity.

Critical judgements, fed by ever fresh knowledge: by this continuous process the scholar-critic enacts his responsibilities. Well, 'ever fresh knowledge' is a tall order, and not even Bateson was capable of living up to it all the time. When one surveys his work one is instantly struck by the way his arguments will repeatedly produce what have becomes in his hands rather unfresh instances and examples from the same old locations. How often, in the fashion of his reiterations of that Arnold passage, do the same proof-texts get adduced—the early essays of Eliot, it might be, or Coleridge's 'the best words in the best order', for 'Westron wynde when wyll thou blow', or 'Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang', or, for that matter, Oliver Elton's *Life* of Frederick York Powell.[18] In one sense this recycling of old materials is an honourable sign of the busy tutor who finds the ideal of 'ever fresh knowledge' persistently at odds with a heavy teaching load (Bateson's was more than forty hours a week at one stage).[19] More honourably still, it's an indication of Bateson's sticking firm to early critical loyalties. When I revised the twentieth-century section of his *Guide* for its third edition he wouldn't let me refer to Eliot's 'unfair treatment' of Lawrence in *After Strange Gods*—he changed the phrase to 'perverse depreciation'; likewise Leavis's 'apt demolition' of Eliot's critical tactics, in *'Anna Karenina' and other Essays*, was softened to an 'attempted demolition'.[20] Interestingly, too, there's an occasional whiff of polemical opportunism about these re-used instances. Fresh from a re-read of Bateson's rather masterly job in 'The Function of Criticism' of restraining Empson's urge to pick up ambiguities about the 'Bare ruined choirs' line, it's slightly jolting to find him using Empson in 1975 against the structuralists with only an unblushing nod towards his own former asperities (' "Bare ruined choirs . . ." Some of the senses may no doubt be fanciful, but . . .').[21] And how did he really rate Evelyn Waugh's style? 'Is Waugh's prose as good as

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all that?' he wondered in 1961 in response to Kingsley Martin and Paul Johnson; 'I must say I had never suspected it'. In 1969, however, wanting now to prove that creative writers did not need to pass through 'university departments of English' he was prepared to swallow his misgivings ('Evelyn Waugh, whose prose style was perhaps the best of his generation, read Modern History').[22]

It's more difficult to catch Bateson out in irresponsibility over poetry than over the novel. Detectable sins of omission about poems are, simply, rare. Only occasionally are they detectable over drama (there is, one notices, the case of the 'well-annotated' but actually non-existent edition of John Ford's *The Broken Heart*, 'by T. J. B. Spencer (1963)' that survived unchallenged into the 'Second Edition with Revisions' of the *Guide* (1970). But Bateson's search for 'ever fresh knowledge', his critical curiosity failed much more obviously to take him close to prose fiction. How few novels, one wonders, especially twentieth-century novels, had he actually read? 'Saki' and L. H. Myers stand out oddly prominently in the early editions of the *Guide* from which Dorothy Richardson, the Powys brothers, Charles Williams, Christopher Isherwood, Anthony Powell, Rex Warner, Samuel Beckett, Malcolm Lowry, Flann O'Brien, Mervyn Peake—to name no others—are all absent. (L. H. Myers was Bateson's Ronald Bottrall: I couldn't persuade him to let me shake him out of the *Guide*'s third edition.) The main prose exhibit in *The Scholar-Critic* is the very short story 'The Fly' by Katherine Mansfield ('probably the shortest *good* short story in English'): revealingly made to bear the whole burden of illustrating 'the characteristic style of realistic prose fiction'.[23] Bateson knew that Arnold too had had a 'critical blind spot' over the English novel.[24] But even Arnold's bad example would not have sanctioned the error of referring repeatedly to a non-existent work called *Howard's End*, had Forster's *Howards End* not been a novel but a poem.[25] Was Bateson's most original critical sin, in fact, the sustaining of a lifelong critical antipathy to prose fiction when he had not read enough major novels carefully enough to make the judgement a responsible one? He may only have been teasing, but he did assert to me (in

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about 1973: certainly after 'The Novel's Original Sin' had been published) that a convalescence had just given him the chance at last to read *War and Peace* and *Middlemarch*, and 'do you know, they weren't bad'?

Even if he were joking (and the detailing friendliness toward Evelyn Waugh, Aldous Huxley and P. G. Wodehouse that accompanies his sweeping dismissal of 'the big stuff' in 'The Novel's Original Sin' doesn't help to convince me he was), jests like that aren't far from irresponsible. And they aren't infrequent in and about Bateson's work, because the scholarly preacher of scholarly criticism, the advocate of knowledge's licensing of judgement, was not always able to keep his less than dryasdust, more journalistic self in tow. A nippily mischievous, a boyishly irresponsible Bateson was continually prone to scurry up critical ladders that, of course, began in the foul rag and bone shop of scholarship, but led giddyingly up and away into an occasionally batty cloud-cuckoo land.

Bateson was an impish schoolboy, as well as the scholarly editor of the *CBEL*. The boy who was, naturally (as he told me), possessed of a copy of Alec Waugh's *The Loom of Youth* just because it was frowned on by every private school head in the land, became the college tutor who refused to allow the Corpus Christi College library to stock Helen Gardner's works or to acquire the reprint edition of *Scrutiny* and who had *After Strange Gods* shelved in Theology; became the editor whose repeated references to the time T. S. Eliot threatened *E in C* with a libel action over the John Peter article showed how pleased he was to have got to Eliot behind his hedge of impersonal reserve;[26] became the lecturer so tickled pink by being offered 'a double-bed' for himself 'and Mrs Leavis' at a North American conference that he loved chuckling over the story with his audiences.

A part of him wanted to shock. He mustn't only be right, he must be dazzlingly, shockingly right. He wanted inside stories, scoops. The brilliant climax of his lifelong need came perhaps when he convinced Robert Graves himself—the man someone once described as 'having the inside story about everything': the Nazarene Gospel, the Greek myths, the Rubáiyát of 'Omar Khayyám, you name it—convinced

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even Graves that several lines in his poem '"The General Elliott"' should not have been amended, including 'Oft-times he drinks, they say, and winks':

> And then, putting on my best Berkshire accent, I read it as "Oft-toimes 'e drinks, they say". I was about to elaborate the inferiority of "Often" in the mouth of a Hinksey labourer when Graves interrupted me: "O.K. you win". And then he added another *stet* in the margin to the changes I had copied in from the later revision.[27]

But this getting hold of inside stories—'When does English Literature Begin?';[28] 'Could Chaucer Spell?';[29] and the like—frequently met with less than the Graves success. 'O.K. you lost' one wants to reply after hearing him on The Novel, or on the 'deadness' of the language Irishmen and Americans talk,[30] or on Eliot's spelling 'mistakes'.[31] When Bateson the critic is let loose like this without Bateson the scholar-critic tugging hard at his coat-tail the quirkily unconvincing readings—of Wordsworth's 'She dwelt among the untrodden ways',[32] of Wyatt's 'They flee from me',[33] of 'Westron wynde'[34]—tend to accumulate. Bateson did, indeed, prove less of a critic than a scholar.

The scholar wasn't, though, a scholar and a gentleman; at least the impish Bateson wasn't. It was, thought H. Coombes disgustedly, 'disgusting' of the *TLS* to publish the story about the double bed and Mrs Leavis in the birthday tribute to Bateson that I (anonymously) contributed to that paper: 'besides being insulting to Mrs Leavis'. Coombes's was an 'appropriate comment' thinks Garry Watson in his excruciatingly hagiographical *The Leavises, the 'Social', and the Left*, obviously undeterred by the fact that the episode actually happened as related.[35] Mr Watson's ideas about gentlemanliness are ones Bateson didn't endorse; he wasn't a 'gentleman' of that mealy-mouthed sort. He was, rather, a player. *E in C* was founded because the gentlemen had let the Oxford English School down for too long. '*Essays in Criticism* is not in any sense an official publication' sang issue No. 1. 'We don't want any official blessing', Bateson had assured F. P. Wilson, the Merton Professor of English Literature: 'what *would* be

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nice would be an official curse'.[36] His voice was always a dissenting one, from outside the literary Establishment whose Professorships were held by critical incompetents and dullards, whose syllabuses and methods of examination, whose examination results were monstrously ill-judged.

But just as he wanted to be both critic and scholar, to be zestily irresponsible as well as dutifully responsible, so he also craved acceptance from the system he scorned. He was hurt by the Oxford English Board's steady refusal to let him examine in the Schools he found so much wrong with, though conceding that would have been 'an embarrassment and a nuisance at any Marks Meeting'.[37] He fired his pupils—as A. Alvarez's loyal public advocacy of his old tutor's neglect showed—with his resentment at the University's and his College's ignoring his merits (Corpus didn't give him a Fellowship until late in 1963).[38] An understandable sense of personal outrage energized his campaigns against the authority of the English Board, Professors, and exams.

Above all, of course, his own failure to get First Classes in either Classics Mods or English Finals gave edge to his kept-up attack on Oxford's examination system. (Bateson got a Second in English Finals in 1924; he'd achieved only a Third Class in Classics Mods in 1922; when W. F. R. Hardie of Balliol—an intellectually snootier college right next door to Bateson's Trinity—later to be President of the College that was so slow to grant Bateson and English studies the recognition they deserved, got a shining First.) He thought examiner's blunders commonplace; but he wished they wouldn't keep blundering in the cases of his brighter pupils as they had in his own.[39] He became polemically besotted with the exam results of distinguished literary and critical people: Aldous Huxley's First in English; Arnold's Second in Greats; York Powell's First in Law and History; Oliver Elton's in Greats; Auden's Third; John Butt's Second; Housman's failure even to pass Greats; Newman's Second. So many Professors, he discovered from *Who's Who*, had Thirds: he had not thought exams had undone so many.[40] Bateson's own journey had many more hiccups to its progress: 'I . . . had had enough

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of Eng. Lit. Oxford long before I became an "Emeritus". Offended pride perhaps? I knew much too well, in indecent excess, that my contributions to scholarship and criticism were decidedly superior to all but at most two or three of my colleagues in the English Faculty'[41]—a self-estimate which now seems more modest than proud.

Polemics that are seen to be rooted thus in personal grievance however justified—ideologies so obviously ideological—are often supposed by that very token to have ruled themselves out of all serious courts. A too slick, even ideological assumption. Bateson made no bones about what rankled him, nor about the amount of himself that he (and his family, whose financial condition was often in his mind), had invested in his choosing to live as a scholar-critic in Oxford. But then, he had never been less than clear that literature demanded commitment of all its readers. A key word for him was *human*. Literature, he argued again and again, is produced by human beings in real human contexts: so you cannot 'draw an indelible line between poetry and life'. Literary history is futilely locked in a 'vicious circle' if it assumes that 'literature can only be explained in terms of itself'. Hence the importance of disciplined 'contextual reading': the process of 'living ourselves into' a text by dint of 'the reconstruction of a human situation that is demonstrably implicit in the particular literary work under discussion'. And this exercise of responsibility towards the text in its contexts had, he suggested, when it was properly conducted, an educational role: in fact only thus did the critic help educate, and fulfil his 'social duty' towards the 'modern mass society'.[42] The *social relevance* urged on contributors to *E in C* in the first number ('as far as possible the literary problem must not be divorced from the problems of group-living, in the widest sense, that lie behind it') wasn't just idle post-war social democratism; it was part of that real sense of democratic mission that inspired Bateson and his pupils to serious thought about the role of English: 'Between us', he says in the Preface to the second edition of *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction*, 'we were determined to make the study of English literature an aid to the democratic way of life in twentieth-century England'. (What astonished him, he said later,

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about Leavis's pronouncements on the critic's function, was the 'absence of *Democracy*'.[43]

Only a critical practice armed with these beliefs could keep inhumanity from invading what should be humane literary studies. And it followed that professional isolaters of texts from human contexts, and all approaches devised to drain value judgements from literary studies, deserved unfriendly treatment. Bateson became an expert at the bum's rush. Poems are not, he insisted, properly viewed as Well-Wrought Urns or Verbal Ikons—static, autotelic, dead objects isolated in space, for that's a view that denies the crucial role of time—the poem's own historical time and the time the reader takes to live himself into it. New Critics, newer Structuralists—all Formalists alike—are simply denying 'human values', turning literature into 'a museum of emphasis and memorability devices, a kind of syntax'. Formalism, he argued, perverts the human nexus of reading and writing, denies the rights of communication, locks up texts into the straitjacket of mere *écriture*, into a sort of solipsistic Dadaism (refusing texts, so to say, *parole*).[44] This refreshing hostility to textual solipsism—as enlightening as one's discovering Jacques Lacan started out as a Surrealist[45]—may turn out to be Bateson's most pertinent contribution to our current critical debates—in a western world that's losing its critical nerve, is letting its literary humanitarianism get silted up with approaches like that of Roger Fowler in *Linguistics and the Novel* (with its keenly Formalist admirations for the mere *palpability* of Dadaist novels like Christine Brooke-Rose's *Thru*), a world of readers and writers who have made *Finnegans Wake* of central importance and who toy fantastically with the pseudo-theological myth of 'absolute texts' in the Borges sense ('the portentous premise of a book impenetrable to contingency . . . nothing can be contingent in the work of an infinite mind').[46] I've not come across Bateson referring anywhere to Pater's 'Sebastian Van Storck', the best of all his *Imaginary Portraits*, but one wants continually to fuel Bateson's testy rejoinders to the refusers of context with something of Pater's sharply horrified presentation of the solipsist's denial of life and, untimately of course, of art: 'the absolute selfishness, which could not, if it would, pass

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beyond the circumference of itself'; 'the bare and formal logic of the answer to a query (never proposed at all to healthy minds)'.[47]

Poems have contexts, and poets have beliefs. Bateson wasn't at all persuaded by Eliot's assertion that Donne did not believe anything.[48] In his 'The Function of Criticism' Bateson's first example of I. A. Richards's 'sometimes positively breathtaking' irresponsibility is that 'notorious . . . characterization of *The Waste Land* as a poem "effecting a complete severance between his [Eliot's] poetry and *all* beliefs" '—the famous footnote on pages 64–5 of Richards's *Science and Poetry* (1926), that soon led Richards on to *Practical Criticism*'s dismaying advocacy in 1929 of the 'pseudo-statement' (draining all poems of statements that actually ask to be believed), and that sparked a series of convincing ripostes from Eliot.[49] 'I cannot see that poetry can be separated from something which I should call belief, and to which I cannot see any reason for refusing the name of belief . . . ,' Eliot told *The Enemy*'s readers. And neither could Bateson. He refused Arnoldianly, of course, to share Eliot's Christian beliefs; indeed he could see no reason why Arnold wasn't right in supposing that poetry would replace religion. For his part, he believed in 'The Necessity of Atheism';[50] but about the inevitability of belief, or ideology, and of ideology-bound producers, texts, and readers he did agree with Eliot. Like Eliot, Bateson believed, we might say, in belief.

It nearly made him a Marxist. As Marxist, perhaps, as Raymond Williams (who contributed a chapter of *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* to the very first volume of *E in C*). Bateson kept up a ready rhetoric of class, for instance. He was the first, I think (though not the last), to object (in 'The Function of Criticism') to C. S. Lewis's turning the two naked girls in Spenser's 'Bower of Bliss' into 'Cissie and Flossie', that is into 'vulgarians'. He knew that Leavis's real enemy (unacknowledged as such by the editor of *Scrutiny*) was 'the Upper Class'.[51] He was prepared to argue with crudely Marxist vigour that 'Shakespeare's plays *were* the product' of Elizabethan inflation.[52] But he had reservations about travelling all the way with the Marxizers. In his 'Poetry and Society' chapter (itself quite significantly

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named) in *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (Ch. 3), he remains sceptical about Christopher Hill's 'Society and Andrew Marvell' essay of 1946 ('easier to feel that this sort of thing is wrong than to be able to say why it is wrong'). In the end he was of the opinion that 'sociological critics' (and he instanced Christopher Caudwell, George Orwell and Edmund Wilson: in a list that did, however, also include Wyndham Lewis!), though admirably in touch with real contexts, evinced a too 'reckless' irresponsibility towards texts.

Like Orwell, Caudwell and Edmund Wilson, of course, Bateson had matured in the fellow-travelling thirties. And he'd clearly imbibed enough of their 'sociological' spirit to be able to share the Marxized insistence of a Raymond Williams not just on the contextual production of texts, but on the non-arbitrary nature of the linguistic signs that they're constructed from.[53] Rarely did Bateson undermine, after the founding of *E in C*, his growing perception of language and literature as ideology. On one late occasion, to be sure, he did fail to act as though he perceived that language tools like dictionaries are also ideologically constrained: he wasn't, in other words, always prepared to go as far as Raymond Williams does in his Introduction to *Keywords* (1976). This was the time when he tried to hit T. S. Eliot (a bit limply it turns out) with the weight of the *OED* ('the form "mensual" is not recorded in the *OED*'; 'There is, as it happens, no such word as *juvescence* in English').[54] It was an aberrant reversion to the cruder faith of his earliest book *English Poetry and the English Language* that the language poets use exists in a given, privilegedly holistic state (frozen authoritatively in dictionaries and grammars and so on): the early refusal to push the inquiry deeper—to make the issue still more ideological—that, at the time, Leavis suggested was too unfundamental ('Mr Bateson tends to be satisfied with considering ideas about language'). ('That review . . . by Leavis', Bateson wrote later, 'was in a way the beginning of *E in C*. It made me realize that my confidence in the kind of fact-finding represented by *CBEL* was naive, logically untenable, indeed *dishonest*, because it pretended to exclude "value" from the process of literary communication.'[55] But the late example

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of the earlier simplicity wasn't just tactically aberrant, it was also, as it were, one of Bateson's occasional moments of yearning for Firsts and thinking Professorships not so bad after all: the rebel tempted for a moment to try on the authoritarian robes he'd learned he didn't need and were no good to him.

He made mistakes. Better still, though: for all his desire to be right, he could admit he had once been wrong. He admitted so—as in the instance I have just cited—often. Not for him the blandly Stalinist assurance and assurances that Solzhenitsyn puts into his *nouvelle* 'An Incident at Krechetova Station': 'We never make mistakes'. If his customarily democratic anti-authoritarianism wasn't able to accept the monistic sway of a Christopher Hill's theory or an Eliot's dogma, neither could it stomach the critical totalitarianism of a Leavis who always pretended he never made mistakes. F. W. Bateson may have been demonstrably the lesser critic. But his having the more mistakingly human approach, and with it the grace, as they say, to confess mistakes, helped make him all the better as a scholar-critic and as—what was for him the same thing—a human being.

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NOTES

[1]*The Scholar-Critic: An Introduction to Literary Research* (1972), 24.

[2]'The Alternative to Scrutiny', *E in C*, XIV, No. 1, January 1964, 12.

[3]Originally in *E in C*, III, No. 1, January 1953, 1–27; reprinted as the new Ch. 14 in *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (2nd edn., 1966).

[4]F. R. Leavis ed., *A Selection from Scrutiny* (2 Vols., Cambridge, 1968), II, 316.

[5]*The Scholar-Critic*, 25.

[6]'Editorial Postscript', *E in C*, XXVIII, No. 4, October 1978, 361, 356.

[7]*The Scholar-Critic*, 8.

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[8]'The Alternative to Scrutiny', loc. cit., 13.

[9]Confessions of an Eng. Lit. Tutor . . .'. *Pelican: the Magazine of Corpus Christi College*, III, No. 2, February 1975 [21].

[10]'Editorial Note', *E in C*, I, No. 1, January 1951.

[11]'The Poetry of Pseudo-Learning' (1970), *Essays in Critical Dissent* (1972), 132.

[12]'Confessions of an Eng. Lit. Tutor . . .', loc. cit.

[13]'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (2nd edn., 1966), 183.

[14]E. F. Jackson, 'A Comment on Bateson's sample of tutors' forecasts', *Essays in Critical Dissent*, 213–14.

[15]'The Novel's Original Sin: A Lecture', *Essays in Critical Dissent*, 244, 248.

[16]'Editorial Commentary: the Second Breath', *E in C*, XV, No. 1, January 1965, 3.

[17]*E in C*, III, No. 1, January 1953, 19.

[18]Referred to at least twice: in 'The Fallibility of Finals', *Essays in Critical Dissent*, 205; and *The Scholar-Critic*, 2 (fn. 1).

[19]Confessions of an Eng. Lit. Tutor . . .', loc. cit.

[20]F. W. Bateson and H. T. Meserole, *A Guide to English and American Literature* (3rd edn., 1976), 205, 208.

[21]'Is Your Structuralism Really Necessary?', *The New Review*, II, No. 14, May 1975, 58.

[22]'Editorial Commentary: the First Ten Years', *E in C*, XI, No. 1 (January 1961), 82; 'Eng. Lit. as it could be' (1969), *Essays in Critical Dissent*, 191.

[23]*The Scholar-Critic*, 97–100.

[24]*A Guide to English Literature* (1965), 151 (fn. 1). So careless about novelists could Arnold be that he didn't, for instance, bother to check where the Brontës were buried before enthusing about their (wrongly sited) graves: 'Haworth Churchyard', lines 88–89, *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Kenneth Allott (1965), 395.

[25]'The Function of Criticism . . .', *E in C*, III, No. 1, January 1953, 25 (not corrected in *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (2nd edn., 1966), 193); 'The Novel's Original Sin', *Essays in Critical Dissent*, 251–2.

[26]John Peter, 'A New Interpretation of *The Waste Land*', *E in C*, II, No. 3, July 1952, 242–266. See e.g. Bateson's

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'Preface to the Reprint Edition' of *E in C*, 10 vols., 1951–60, by Swets & Zeitlinger N.V. (Amsterdam 1965), which is entirely taken up with the Eliot affair.

[27]*The Scholar-Critic*, 113.

[28]*A Guide to English Literature* (1965), 17–21.

[29]*E in C*, XXV, No. 1, January 1975, 2–24.

[30]Of Yeats and Eliot: 'The one is an Irishman, the other an American, and the language they maltreat with masterly virtuosity is not exactly English but a sweeter and less stubborn instrument, a *dead* language.' *English Poetry and the English Language* (2nd edn., NY, 1961), 128.

[31]'The Poetry of Pseudo-Learning', *Essays in Critical Dissent*, 134, 135.

[32]*Wordsworth: A Re-Interpretation* (2nd ed., 1956), 101–102.

[33]*English Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (2nd edn., 1966), 101–102.

[34]*A Guide to English Literature* (1965), 31–32. Cf. *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction*, edn. cit., 59–60.

[35]Anon., 'A Bateson Birthday', *TLS*, 7 March 1975, 250; H. Coombes, letter, *TLS*, 14 March 1975, 279; Arthur H. Scouten, letter, *TLS*, 11 April 1975, 400; Garry Watson, *The Leavises, The 'Social', and The Left* (Swansea, 1978), 82f; cf. 33–34 (fn.).

[36]'Editorial Commentary: the Second Breath', *E in C*, XV, No. 1, January 1965, 1.

[37]'Confessions of an Eng. Lit. Tutor', loc. cit.

[38]A. Alvarez, 'Oxford' (the *New Statesman*, 1963), *Beyond All This Fiddle* (1968), 291–296. Some older members of Corpus profess to have been incited by this article to vote for upgrading Bateson from Lecturer to Fellow.

[39]See *Essays in Critical Dissent*, 199–220.

[40]*Essays in Critical Dissent*, xii, xiii, xiv (and fn. 1), 108, 205, 219; *The Scholar-Critic*, 2; *E in C*, XV, No. 1, January 1965, 5.

[41]'Confessions of an Eng. Lit. Tutor . . .', loc. cit.

[42]*English Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (2nd edn., 1966), 73, and (from 'The Function of Criticism' chapter), 183–4; 188–9.

[43]'Editorial Postcript', *E in C*, XXVII, No. 4, October 1978, 360.

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[44]'The New Bibliography and the "New Criticism"' (1961), *Essays in Critical Dissent* (1972), 9, 13; 'Is Your Structuralism Really Necessary?', *The New Review*, II, No. 14, May 1975, 55–58.

[45]As a contributor to *Minotaure* he's scooped up into *enfant horrible* David Gascoyne's *A Short Survey of Surrealism* (1935), 126.

[46]Roger Fowler, *Linguistics and the Novel* (1977), Ch. 3, 'Text'; Stephen Heath, *The Nouveau Roman* (1972), e.g. 25–29; Jorge Louis Borges, *Labyrinths* (Penguin edn., 1971), 244–7 ('The Mirror of Enigmas').

[47]*Imaginary Portraits* (reprint of the 4th edn., 1907), 109, 111.

[48]'The Poetry of Pseudo-Learning', *Essays in Critical Dissent*, 137.

[49]Bateson, *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (2nd edn., 1966), 177; I. A. Richards, *Science and Poetry* (1926), Ch. 6, 'Poetry and Beliefs', 55–67 (this chapter first appeared as 'A Background for Contemporary Poetry', the *Criterion*, III, No. 12, July 1925, 511–528); T. S. Eliot, 'A Note on Poetry and Belief', *The Enemy*, ed. Wyndham Lewis, No. 1, January 1927, 15–17, and 'Dante', *Selected Essays* (3rd edn., 1951), 257–9, 269–71.

[50]See e.g. 'Literature and Atheism' (1965), *Essays in Critical Dissent*, 193–198.

[51]'Editorial Postscript', *E in C*, XXVIII, No. 4, October 1978, 359.

[52]*A Guide to English Literature* (1965), 'Rebirth or Inflation?', 53–55.

[53]See e.g. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), Ch. 4, 'Signs and Notations'.

[54]*Essays in Critical Dissent*, 134, 135. *Mensual* was, in fact, in the *OED*; and (dictionaries eventually catch up with *parole*) so now is *juvescence* (*A Supplement to the OED*, II, H–N, Oxford 1976, p. 453): designated *rare*, but cited in two instances, Eliot's (of course) and Spender's.

[55]See *The Importance of Scrutiny*, ed. Eric Bentley (N.Y., 1948), 12–22, for Leavis *v.* Bateson over *English Poetry and the English Language*; and Bateson's 'Editorial Postscript', *E in C*, loc. cit., 356.

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The Analysis of Poetic Texts: Owen's 'Futility' and Davie's 'The Garden Party'

F. W. BATESON

(A talk given at the University Teachers of English Conference, Birmingham, 1977)

YOU WILL REMEMBER the old lady who is alleged by E. M. Forster to have said 'How can I know what I mean until I see what I say?'. Translated into Lit. Crit. the old lady's question becomes: 'How can we know what a poem's first stanza (for example) really means until we have reached its last stanza?' Just as in conversation it is often difficult to decide from the first few words of a sentence whether you are being asked a question or presented with a piece of information, or indeed whether you are being flattered or being insulted. In other words, a poem (like any other verbal construct) operates in the dimension of time. It is a temporal artifact. Any spatial elements that may be superimposed upon it—a reciter's costume or attractive appearance, or the background of scenery and properties in the presentation of a verse play, as also George Herbert's wings or altars—all these are secondary titillations, essentially inessential.

The preceding propositions are not exactly new. They were discussed and elaborated in Lessing's *Laokoön*. But as far as I remember they are ignored entirely in I. A. Richards's *Practical Criticism*, and I have not come across their serious application by the American 'explicators' either. Instead we are fobbed off with Structure, a sacred word, whereas (if literary criticism wishes to be technical) it should be busying itself with Process (the forwards-cum-backwards motion of living speech).

As an elementary example of literary process I ask you to agree that a poem which ends its first line with the word *mountains* may very well end its second line with the word *fountains*. What is the effect of such a rhyme on the alert reader? The immediate effect of this particular rhyme on a reader prepared to take the poem seriously is, I suggest,

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to qualify his original reaction to *mountains*. In the relationship to *fountains*, as a result of that relationship, *mountains* either becomes more artificial, mere poetic diction, or (if the context demands it) *less* artificial—the opposite of *fountains*, which are made by man, with *mountains* now primarily natural objects and the habitat of the wildest animals.

I propose to apply a similar analysis to Wilfred Owen's 'Futility', a poem that in my opinion tends to be overrated today.

Move him into the sun—
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields unsown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds,—
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides,
Full-nerved—still-warm—too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
—O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

To the casual reader the first five lines may seem to describe an actual First World War episode—either one in which Owen had himself been involved or one related to him by a fellow-officer, Sassoon perhaps or Robert Graves. The lines are apparently naturalistic. But as the poem proceeds it becomes clear that the sun's function in it is primarily allegorical and a critical reader, finding the 'kind old sun' being personified as a sort of Cheeryble Brother, and some nonsensical astronomy about the earth having been a cold star warmed up for us by the sun, naturally takes a hard second look at the poem's opening lines. In a temporal artifact regress is as inevitable as progress.

The words that surprise me most in the first five lines are 'and this snow'. The winter of 1916/17 *was* exception-

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ally cold and Owen's letters to his mother often mention the snow and the cold. To move the dead or dying man from the Casualty Clearing Centre out into a sunshine that was bitterly cold seems curiously inhumane. Another puzzle is created by 'fields unsown'. An arable farmer such as this man was (unless he was such a farmer's son) will always have many worries, but it seems perverse to select this particular comparatively trivial worry, especially as the dreamer is happily 'At home' (the reading that displaced the less sentimental 'In Wales' in two of the drafts). And then one notices that 'snow' and 'unsown' are both rhyme-words.

You may perhaps have noticed the hour-glass effect of the metrical pattern of the two stanzas. Each stanza begins and ends with a 6-syllable line. Between the two 6-syllable lines come five 8-syllable lines. And there is a rather similar effect in the conjunction of consonantal half-rhymes in ll. 1–6 of each stanza with a last line in each that is a full rhyme to its fifth line. In this way the fifth line functions both as consonantal rhyme or 'pararhyme' to 1.6 and full rhyme to 1.7. There are further elegances of parallelism: thus both stanzas begin with a 1-syllable imperative ('Move', 'Think').

If the ultimate test of tragic speech (the most humanly relevant words in the most humanly effective order) is its memorability, as I think it is, I suppose the fragmentary Preface Owen wrote in July 1918 for the projected collection *Disabled and Other Poems* would generally be agreed to be more memorable than any of his poems except perhaps *Strange Meeting*. May I remind you of some of its most striking sentences?

> Above all I am not concerned with Poetry.
> My subject is War, and the pity of War.
> . . . All a poet can do to-day is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful.

These sentences provide a critical basis for the reading of the poems. They are followed in Blunden's edition (1931)—but not in Day Lewis's (1963)—by a table of Contents, which lists the poems (by their titles) that Owen

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wanted the collection to contain. ('Futility', written the month before, is of course in it.)

These splendid sentences deserve to be taken seriously. They *justify* the poem. But so taken there is an apparent contradiction between the injunction that the true poets must be truthful and the claim that in his poems—'elegies' as Owen also describes them in this Preface—he has not been 'concerned with Poetry'. No doubt in a certain ultimate sense the poetry *is* in the pity. But the superficial elegance of 'Futility'—especially the metrical elegance—is almost a mockery of the tragically pathetic subject-matter. There is too much Poetry and too little Pity.

The poem ends with three rhetorical questions. For me there is too much rhetoric for one's comfort in the whole appeal to evolutionary wastage. The pity of war lies in man killing man. The sun doesn't come into it. The sun/cold star business is an irrelevant conceit. Man as a moral being was not sun-made but man-made. The splendour and tragedy of the poem's one good line 'Was it for this the clay grew tall?' is a cry of the human heart because present man, potentially the creator of an even better man, has betrayed himself. The sun is an a-moral irrelevance. This true poet has not been truthful here.

Owen wrote four other poems in June 1918—only one of which he proposed including in *Disabled and Other Poems*. This is 'Arms and the Boy', which is good if comparatively unambitious. The other three are only marginally about the War and have their ragged edges. 'Futility's failure, as I think it must be accounted to be, was an attempt to return to the mood of the great war poems of 1917. The Hell of trench warfare was already becoming half-forgotten, except as an abstraction (he had been in hospital in Scotland or convalescent in England for over thirteen months). A 1917 poem in conventional rhyme called 'Asleep' written in fact on a walk above Winchester, is described in a letter to his cousin as 'written *as from* the trenches. I could almost see the dead lying about in the hollows of the downs'. The dead man in 'Futility' is on the contrary a stage prop required for the conceit about the sun. If the man is dead or dying the moving him into the sun is an unreal luxury for the poet's sentimentality to

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batten on. He has become a 'topos'. Owen even gave this 'Topos' a name—'Grief'. To the list of poems he made in July 1918 for *Disabled and Other Poems* there are attached comments or summaries. Five poems are bracketed together with the tag 'Grief'. 'Futility' is the fifth in the group, the third being 'Anthem for Dead Youth' (which was written in September 1917); two of the others are also 1917 poems. (There is also an unidentifiable 'Ode'.) Now the 1917 poems have the freshness and horror of recent experience. The 'Grief' is authentic and moving—*not* a 'topos', but an overwhelming personal experience. In 'Futility' the Grief has become an excuse for prosodic gadgets. Saussure would have disagreed with me. But Saussure, though aware of the distinguishability of what he called *langue* and what he called *parole*, was really only fascinated by the intricacies of *langue*; *parole* seems to have bored him, as it may bore the stylisticians. Well, I lived through the First War. Each year a new batch of the monitors who ran the house I was in (it was a conventional boarding school)—each year they departed to become Second Lieutenants; within nine months or so half of them had been killed. I survived primarily by being two years too young when the War ended. Compared to that War, World War II was a picnic—at least for the English Army.

The moral objection to 'Futility' is that mankind, considered as a society of civilized human beings, is by implication sun-made rather than man-made, *an effect and not a cause*. The metrical elegance is therefore immoral. If the proper reaction to trench warfare is to write elegantly about it then trench warfare becomes aesthetically desirable like a sunset, a primrose by the river's brim, or a model in the nude. *Quod est absurdum*. And worse than absurd—*wicked*.

If 'Futility' has been over-rated—because, I suspect, of a carry-over from the respect properly due to Owen because of half a dozen really distinguished earlier poems, his attractive personality, and his heroic death, Davie's 'The Garden Poetry' has been under-rated because he is primarily a literary critic, his personality lacks immediate charm, and his escape from the muddles of Essex University to the big money of Stanford has been conspicuously unheroic.

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'The Garden Party' is an early poem. I met it for the first time in (I think) *The New Statesman—circa* 1950—and it was reprinted in his slim paper-back collection *The Brides of Reason* (1955). I chose the poem because Davie and I operate on the same wave-length critically—*and* he's one of the two living poets I've ever persuaded to accept an emendation in one of their poems. (Robert Graves was the other.) The poem also raises—and, I think, solves—the problem of elegance. As 'Futility' didn't.

A poem is a temporal artifact. That, let me repeat, is the central formal fact about literature generally. Even a short poem must have the beginning, middle and end that Aristotle demanded of a tragedy. The necessity applies equally to the author, the communicating agent (copyist, printer, etc.) and the reader, reciter, auditor or critic. For the *reader* the process will normally begin with the translation of printed (or misprinted) visual, i.e. spatial, symbols into a series of meaningful words, clauses, sentences.

As the meanings are recognized the reader 'responds' emotionally and aesthetically to the literary experience the author invites him to share—via of course the spatial agencies of letters, punctuation, etc. Audience-response presupposes and follows upon audience-understanding. It begins with a recognition of the meaning of the first sentence—often indeed before that with the title—and it continues with increasing urgency until the reading is completed. But such a one-way *progressive* reading—though adequate for sign-post information ('Oxford 6 miles')—is insufficient for a poem which must then be read *regressively* (more or less backwards), so that the temporal sequence of, say, stanzas I–III can be corrected by the meanings and responses to them of stanzas III–I. Is the serpent's tail (to use Coleridge's metaphor) in its mouth or not? Not until this final temporal process, the reader's correlative to an author's revisions, has been completed is a critical evaluation possible.

With 'The Garden Party' then a temporal reading, one with both progress and regress of understanding and response is necessary before the poem's value, aesthetic and human, can be established.

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Above a stretch of still unravaged weald
In our Black Country, in a cedar-shade,
I found, shared out in tennis courts, a field
Where children of the local magnates played.

And I grew envious of their moneyed ease
In Scott Fitzgerald's unembarrassed vein,
Let prigs, I thought, fool others as they please,
I only wish I had my time again.

To crown a situation as contrived
As any in 'The Beautiful and Damned',
The phantom of my earliest love arrived;
I shook absurdly as I shook her hand.

As dusk drew in on cultivated cries,
Faces hung pearls upon a cedar-bough;
And gin could blur the glitter of her eyes,
But it's too late to learn to tango now.

My father, of a more submissive school,
Remarks the rich themselves are always sad.
There is that sort of equalizing rule;
But theirs is all the youth we might have had.

Davie's essential theme appears to be the desirability or otherwise of being a rich man's son. The final verse may suggest that the submissive father was wrong in stressing the sadness of the rich and that the son—who may reasonably be identified with Donald Davie himself, the grammar-school boy who won a Cambridge scholarship and eventually became a college supervisor there while working on his doctoral thesis—that the son was right to complain that he had had no real youth. A second reading, however, immediately qualifies this interpretation.

The principal technical difference between Owen's poem and Davie's is that, whereas Owen can be said to have been betrayed by the regressive consequence of a temporal artifact—which invites us to a second reading with the result that the elaborate conceit about the sun in ll. 6–14 compels us to recognize that the real-life appearance of the first five lines is also virtually a conceit—Davie on the other hand has exploited the temporal nature of poetry by a series of what might be called hiatuses. The reader has

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to fill in the omitted intervals himself: *betrayal* by the temporal artifact versus its exploitation.

Davie begins by *finding* himself (l. 3) for no special reason in the field with the tennis courts. Two grammatical ambiguities follow. (1) It is not clear whether the 'children' (age not specified) of the magnates are playing at the time or whether the courts were made for the children to play on when they wanted to. (2) There is another ambiguity in the 'their' of 1.5. This might refer either to the children or to the industrial magnates—neither a group normally characterized by social 'ease'. Can it really *mean* either?

This is not a tennis party but a 'Garden Party'. By one of Davie's time-shifts what we had been thinking of as children's courts have become the locale of a party of young adults, for which the cedars of ll. 2 and 14 are clearly appropriate. By another time-shift Davie is no longer taking a stroll, lonely as a cloud, but has become somehow or other a guest at the party. (Not a gate-crasher!) The deliberate uncertainty about the time and place of the party is increased for us by the arrival of his first love. What was she doing there? They obviously hadn't seen each other for a very long time. Another time-shift? The unexpectedness of it all is summed up in the word 'phantom'. I once asked Davie what he had meant by 'The phantom of my earliest love'. Was it her unreality on this not very real occasion? He had *found* himself in the field and now *found* himself at this party. Yes, Davie said, something like that. There are now two basic time-shifts implicit—back some years to the calf-love of adolescence and forward to a present when he is old enough to wish he had his time again. But this party is for adults only. Gin is flowing freely. There is no garden, it is true, only a field with some tennis courts and cedars in it.

The last verse is in another mode. With his father's help—years later perhaps—such concrete actualities as local magnates, garden parties, love affairs that come to nothing are subsumed under the abstractions Wealth and Youth. The shift to generalization is refreshingly different and the time-shift is complete. Would it have been better not to have been the kind of highbrow 'swot' who reads Scott Fitzgerald for relaxation? Or to have had a rich

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father who is always sad, perhaps because bankruptcy is imminent or he is becoming an alcoholic.

The preceding technical analysis will have been justified if it enables the reader to respond more fully to the dazzling uncertainties of Davie's poem. They are concentrated in its most memorable line:

> I shook absurdly as I shook her hand.

Between the innocent ecstasies of his 'earliest love' and the sophistication of maturity there has been more than a time-interval measurable in years. But it was nevertheless absurd to be so overwhelmed by the reunion. By inserting the adverb between 'I shook' and 'as I shook' Davie has demonstrated the regain of his original self-control.

More generally, by his quizzical exploitation of the uncertainties and potential contradictions always present in a temporal artifact he is able to undercut the sentimentalities of

> I only wish I had my time again

or

> But theirs is all the youth we might have had

as he also undercuts them in the tone of the phrasing. Scott Fitzgerald's appearance is particularly appropriate. We remember the legendary dialogue with Edmund Wilson:

> Fitzgerald: The rich are *different* from us.
> Wilson: Yes, they have more money.

The 'equalizing rule' enunciated by Davie's father in fact rules the poem, even if he allows the son the last word. The rule is one of a sense of proportion—'nothing too much', the civilized imperative that was inscribed on the wall of the Temple at Delphi.

I consider 'The Garden Party' a more serious poem essentially, one that the literary critic should therefore take more seriously, than 'Futility' and its 'fatuous' sunbeams'.

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F. W. Bateson: A Check-List

A. D. BARKER

THE following list comprises items felt to be of interest to readers of Essays in Criticism. *F.W.B.'s occasional journalism, his numerous book reviews, reprintings and anthologized extracts from his existing publications have been excluded.*

1920

'Ulysses' (a poem), *The Athenaeum*, 22nd October, 545

1921

'Atavisms' and 'Estranged' (two poems), *The Oxford Outlook*, iii, 105 and 349

'Trespassers' (a poem), *Oxford Poetry 1921* (Oxford and New York, 1922)

1922

'Twilight', 'Ruined Church', 'Estranged' (from *The Oxford Outlook* 1921), 'Light Love' (four poems), *Oxford Poetry 1922* (Oxford and New York, 1923)

1923

'The Hunter', 'The Lover's Ghost', 'Fancy', 'Orpheus' (four poems), *Oxford Poetry 1923* (Oxford and New York, 1924), ed. David Cleghorn Thomson and F. W. Bateson

1925

'*The Double Gallant* of Colley Cibber', *Review of English Studies*, i, 343–6

1926

'Contemporary Essayists', *The Reader*, ii, I. Introductory, 11–13; II. Mr Max Beerbohm, 59–61; III. Mr A. B. Walkley, 104–7

1927

'Contemporary Essayists', *The Reader*, ii, IV. Mr G. K. Chesterton, 152–5; V, Mr J. B. Priestley, 202–6; VI. Mr Aldous Huxley, 251–4

'Motteux and *The Amorous Miser*', *RES*, iii, 340–2

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1929

English Comic Drama 1700–1750 (Oxford, re-issued New York, 1963)

'The *Errata* in *The Tatler*', *RES*, v, 155–66

'The Text of Sheridan', *Times Literary Supplement*, 28th November, p. 998

1930

The Works of Congreve, ed. with an Introduction and Bibliographical Notes by F. W. Bateson (London)

1934

English Poetry and the English Language (Oxford)

[John Gay's] *The Beggar's Opera*, ed. F. W. Bateson (Temple Dramatists series) (London)

1935

Scrutiny, iv, 181–5 [A reply to F. R. Leavis's review of *English Poetry and the English Language*]

1939

A Short History of Steeple Clayden (Oxford)

1940

The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, ed. F. W. Bateson (Cambridge)

'Notes on the Text of Two Sheridan Plays', *RES*, xvi, 312–7

'Fictitious Names in Pope's *Moral Essays*', *Notes and Queries*, clxxix, 84

1941

'The Game of Ombre in *The Rape of the Lock*', *TLS*, 1st March, p. 108

1944

'Lines on the Buckinghamshire Parish Machinery Pools', *The New Statesman and Nation*, xxviii, 12th August, p. 104

1946

Mixed Farming and Muddled Thinking: An analysis of current agricultural policy (London). [The report, written

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by F. W. Bateson, of an enquiry organized by Viscount Astor and B. Seebohm Rowntree]
Towards a Socialist Agriculture, ed. F. W. Bateson (London)

1948

Socialism and Farming (Fabian Publications)

1950

English Poetry, a Critical Introduction (London)

1951

Epistles to Several Persons, ed. F. W. Bateson (The Twickenham Edition of the Works of Alexander Pope, III, ii)
Essays in Criticism, i, ed. F. W. Bateson,
'Elementary, My Dear Hotson! A Caveat for Literary Detectives', 81–8
'Contribution to a Dictionary of Critical Terms: I. *Comedy of Manners*', 89–93
'Contribution to a Dictionary of Critical Terms: II. *Dissociation of Sensibility*', 302–12

1952

'The Founding of a New Critical Quarterly', *The American Oxonian*, xxxix, 80–2
Essays in Criticism, ii, ed. F. W. Bateson,
'Intention and Blake's *Jerusalem*' ['The Critical Forum'], 106–10, 113–14
'Dissociation of Sensibility' ['The Critical Forum'], 213–4
'Immediacy in Poetry', ['The Critical Forum'], 460–2

1953

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The editors of Essays in Criticism *would be glad to receive any addenda to this list.*]

Christ Church, Oxford

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Book Reviews

TENNYSON PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

The Poetry of Tennyson. By A. DWIGHT CULLER. Yale University Press, 1977; £10.80.

Tennyson, Poet and Prophet. By PHILIP HENDERSON. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977; £6.95.

'I'm afraid I think the world is darkened; I daresay it will brighten again.' Queen Victoria thought Tennyson's remarks during one of their interviews worth noting in her diary in 1883. The tentative and apologetic manner, as if it really were the weather he was talking about, is characteristic, and surely gives the lie to Philip Henderson's title for his biography, *Tennyson, Poet and Prophet.* So does the look of the photograph on the dust-jacket—sharp eyes and nose turned from the watcher in reticence rather than prescience, solemnity toppled by the extravagant ill-fitting hat, hands ready to fidget, the prim uprightness of a nervous schoolboy. This useful biography (selecting from material offered by many scholars, notably Sir Charles Tennyson, R. W. Rader, John Killham and Christopher Ricks), is full of word-pictures, sayings and anecdotes of an inactive private man continually seen by others. Nathaniel Hawthorne, at the exhibition of National Art Treasures in Manchester in 1877, rejoiced in him more than in 'all the other wonders of the exhibition', feeling 'a morbid painfulness in him, a something not to be meddled with'. Edmund Gosse, a source of several descriptions, gives one not printed before, of Tennyson's funeral in 1892: 'a crowd of perfectly callous nonentities', he says, seemed to see it as 'a show and rather a poor one'; but that seems to be rather his own feeling too.

The compilation of so many views often gives this biography a rather desultory air, as with the topics bundled together on p. 163: the funerals of Sir John Simeon and Dickens, the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, Tennyson's eczema and depression and his disapproval of 'the frightful corruption' of French literature, an attack on his poetry and his response, friends moving house, a meeting

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with Gosse. Here also we are told that the friends commemorated with Sir John Simeon 'In the Garden at Swainston' were 'of course, Arthur Hallam and Henry Lushington', but the only other reference to Henry Lushington tells us no more about him. Professor Ricks's hint that material exists at Lincoln for a study of Tennyson's financial rewards, sales and relations with his publishers is not taken up (when he died he left £57,206 13s. 9d., Ricks notes). Though there are many anecdotes recording admiration or disapproval—for example, an enchanting interlude with Stephen Hawker, the medievalizing and eccentric clergyman-poet, in Cornwall—there is no full and direct consideration of a changing public's reaction to Tennyson's life's work: occasional comments from friends and critics are not enough. Dwight Culler speaks of *The May Queen* as 'universally beloved in the Victorian era'; Henderson shows how it provoked jeering, as in *The Secular Review*'s reaction to his peerage in 1884 (reluctantly accepted by Tennyson as an honour due to literature rather than to himself):

> You must wake and call me early, call me early, Vicky dear;
> To-morrow will be the silliest day we've seen for many a year,
> For I'm a lacky and a prig, Vicky, that sham and shoddy reveres,
> And I'm to be one of the peers, Vicky, I'm to be one of the peers.

That note is sounded again in a contribution by Terry Eagleton to the 1977 Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature: '. . . the "public", "masculine" text which unquestionably confirms his function as a literary state-lackey (*In Memoriam*) is no more than a restless congeries of private ("feminine") lyrics'. 'I don't like this cocked hat business at all', grumbled Tennyson, 'How can I take off my cocked hat and bow three times in the House of Lords?' That inhibition—together with a dry detachment, humour, slyness as well as shyness—is the most certain impression that emerges from all the slightly disatisfied and ultimately unsatisfying exhibitions of Tennyson outside his poetry,

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with their ambiguous suggestions of a dilapidated monument, a pirate in carpet slippers, shuffling and hesitant: the product of people looking for the prophet, and finding only Tennyson with his reluctant, offhand, Hardyesque air:

> I looked up from my writing,
> And gave a start to see,
> As if rapt in my inditing,
> The moon's full gaze on me . . .
>
> . . . curious to look
> Into the blinkered mind
> Of one who wants to write a book
> In a world of such a kind.

He is like Hardy not only in metrical and rhythmic virtuosity, and in sensitivity to the English language in its variety (it is their diction whch marks the essential difference), but also in being an intrinsically reticent man in an age when the writer was called upon to be a public figure and to speak on public issues. Both nagged in their duty and dubiety at 'those big words which make people unhappy' (in Joyce's dismissive phrase); or Tennyson would speak out in impatient extremism, as on the Governor Eyre case (justifying, with Carlyle, Dickens and Kingsley, the sadistic excess which the Governor of Jamaica had permitted and exercised in putting down a small rebellion in 1865)—the isolate suddenly looking up at the world; yet remaining oddly quiescent and comfortable in himself, essentially disengaged, witholding ultimately both judgement and commitment, faithful to his own doubtfulness. Ruskin's judgement of Scott in *Modern Painters* may be more true of Tennyson: 'The most startling fault of the age being its faithlessness, it is necessary that its greatest man should be faithless. Nothing is more notable or sorrowful in Scott's mind than its incapacity of steady belief in anything. He cannot even resolve hardily to believe in a ghost. He never can clearly ascertain whether there is anything behind the arras but rats; never draws sword, and thrusts at it for life or death'. The occasional support of extreme action seems associated with extreme personal inaction.

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The stance of public responsibility that he was urged to take up by his closest friends, together with his deep anxiety and melancholia, drove Tennyson to adopt attitudes and to put no faith in them. He writes out of his failure to believe utterly or to despair utterly. What he has to sustain him is the power of language through which, as Mallarmé (and of course his contemporary English audience) recognized, he has the right to be a national poet, not prophet:

> Avoir doté la voix d'intonations point ouïes jusqu'à soi . . . et faire rendre à l'instrument national tels accords neufs mais reconnus innés, constitue la poète, dans l'extension de sa tâche ou de son prestige.

> O let the solid ground
> Not fail beneath my feet . . .
> (*Maud*)

The impact of the wishful command ('O let . . .!') slips away into the feared negation. We must surely expect a positive after a cry like that, but we find only the minimum security, 'not fail'. The drop between the two lines is breathtaking. This intense awareness of the shakiness of things is the ground of Tennyson's treacherousness; he keeps his footing by verbal and metrical dexterity. To survive like this might seem unforgivable to some, as John Bayley suggests in a review of these books: 'To have been kept alive and sane by the gift of words, and then to have been made rich and famous by it . . . surely this must argue stupidity, hypocrisy, evasion, or all three?' (*TLS*, March 3rd, 1978).

Tennyson was neither a *poète maudit*, nor, at his best, which is what concerns us, a state-lackey, yet he does deal in public things as well as the intensities and subtleties of despair and the delights of the senses and emotions. Instant aversion from the follies of militarism, national prejudice, imperial confidence and hypocrisy, is not diverted by Professor Bayley's talk of how personal and irresponsible great poetry is: the appeal 'ad hominem' is to a person with social feelings and ideas. In *To the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava*, which introduces the 1889 poems, Britain strides the globe:

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She moving, at her girdle clash
The golden keys of East and West.

Christopher Ricks quietly annotates the third stanza ('Your rule has made the people love/Their ruler'): 'Dufferin's rule in India was characterized by a strengthening of the army and by many military operations'. This public voice is not 'responsible': for Tennyson here such judgements are subordinated to what is required by courtesy, and indeed Dufferin's name and fame could be left to time and its ironies. Within the poem the public reference is valid for its binary oppositon to the private occasion: Lionel, Tennyson's son, had caught the fever of which he died while working in India, and had been cared for by the Governor-General before attempting to return home. The poem moves from public titles of Statesmen and Nations, East and West, to intricacies of personal pronouns:

. . . that you and yours may know
From me and mine, how dear a debt
We owed you, and are owing yet
To you and yours, and still would owe.

The excess of pronouns marks the transition in the poem with something like Lewis Carroll's exploitation of syntactical possibilities to the exclusion of all others:

If I or she should chance to be
Involved in this affair,
He trusts to you to set them free
Exactly as we were.
(*Alice in Wonderland*)

The transition is to a level of communication still governed by conventions, those of courteous letter-writing ('you and yours'). The possibilities of ironic discourtesy, of bitterness, are muted ('how *dear* a debt') and then emphatically denied ('We . . . still would owe'). As in *In Memoriam*, whose stanza it shares, the heart of the poem is an absence; the burial, like Arthur Hallam's, is not witnessed by the poet:

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And those lone rites I have not seen
And one drear sound I have not heard . . .

Not there to bid my boy farewell,
When That within the coffin fell . . .

The demonstrative pronoun 'That', capitalized like a title of respect, displaces the personal 'he', 'my boy'. The absence is climactically marked by the same conventions of the thank-you letter:

Dying, 'Unspeakable' he wrote
'Their kindness', and he wrote no more.

The banal conventional way of writing is transformed by its collision with the really unspeakable. Because it follows 'Dying' we have to hesitate over that word before we can embed it properly in context, so that what is quite expected in a thank-you letter comes as a shock. The runaway emotion of the lines quoted ('not seen', 'not heard', 'not there') is recalled and controlled in the penultimate stanza ('To question why . . . Not mine!') and modulated back to the final courtesy of 'you and yours'. It is in managing to speak of the unspeakable and to control the terror of negation that Tennyson becomes a great and humanly moving poet. Whatever our judgement of the poem's imperialism, that political attitude, by providing an august Presence to set against the intimate absence, is an ineradicable element in the poem's success.

Professor Culler does not mention this poem, which meets shock and survives by the minimal securities of social and poetic convention, but his relation of the form and meaning of the mature poems to gradualist and uniformitarian views of evolution, as opposed to apocalyptic catastrophism (Lyell, not Cuvier and Buckland), is illuminating. *Maud* may be a catastrophic freak, harking back to the adolescent *Armageddon*, but *In Memoriam* 'operates not by means of volcanic eruptions and deluges but by subsidence and erosion . . . at no place . . . is there a true reversal'. That is, there is no clear peripeteia or elegaic turn from grieving, either to apotheosis of the dead man or to recognition that 'it is life not death that counts' (John Killham). In spite of the three-year narrative with its

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thematic progress from Despair to Regret to Hope, which Tennyson imposed on the sequence in preparing it for publication, it retains the wavering and regressive quality imposed by the actual seventeen years of composition. Very early lyrics, or lines quarried from poems written in the first shock of grief, remain embedded like fossils in the developing structure. Re-reading earlier lyrics in the course of adding to or shaping the long sequence ensured the repeated renewal of the original shock and its destructive effects ('The whole house shaken to its fall . . . thought drifting like the hills of sand', *Harvard Notebook* 17, echoed in sections III and X). Renewed thought and feeling, utterly characteristic of the common course of bereavement, brought repeated recoveries of ground too.

So in the very early XXVIII, the sound of the local church bells which 'Swell out and fail, as if a door/Were shut between me and the sound' echoes the poet's guilty sense of shutting himself off from affectionate intercourse with living friends and relatives, to embrace 'absence, darkness, death, things which are not'—as in section II, when the poet wants to become the yew tree because it holds the corpse in a strangling embrace so tight as to be fixed for ever. The strange but characteristic expression, 'I seem to fail from out my blood/And grow incorporate into thee', carries as a subordinate meaning the poet's own disapproval of such passionate weakness. Section XXVIII's imagery of doors shut and opened, which suggests isolated self-absorption as against social relationship, and so connects with the imagery of embrace and hand-clasping, recurs throughout the poem. Section CVIII, late in the sequence and in composition, seems to open the door and reject the guilty embrace of the dead:

> I will not shut me from my kind
> And, lest I stiffen into stone
> I will not eat my heart alone . . .

But in the Epilogue, though doors are opened, the sound of bells unchecked, family and local relationships embraced, the image of the poet stiffened into stone remains, 'like a statue solid-set/And moulded in colossal calm'.

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Professor Culler says of the Epilogue that it would have fulfilled its function—'to widen out the vision from the poet's personal sorrow to some larger, even cosmic dimension'—'if it were a better poem'. The real success in the Epilogue lies not in its reasoning but in its consummation of the exhilaration which, throughout the poem's circlings, has served to release the stony, frozen, rooted regression to grief: the flight and song of birds, the ringing of bells, rising movements of air and sound-waves—Merlin making the moon rise:

> . . . and overhead
> Begins the clash and clang that tells
> The joy to every wandering breeze;
> The blind wall rocks, and on the trees
> The dead leaf trembles to the bells . . .
>
> And last the dance;—till I retire:
> Dumb is that tower which spake so loud,
> And high in heaven the streaming cloud,
> And on the downs a rising fire:
>
> And rise, O moon . . .

The intense and various verbal and rhythmic excitement *is* the release, the widening-out.

The absence of peripeteia is frequently used to point out the poem's lack of structure. But what if geological evolution rather than the human construction of pastoral elegy should provide the structural model? Culler calls sections LV–LVI Tennyson's Everlasting No, calling into question the preceding tentative sequence on immortality. Sections LIV–LVII (the expansion and contraction of the sequences we need to consider is an essential part of the experience of reading the poem) present successive erosions of hope, the slipping of ground from under us:

> Oh yet we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill . . .

The wishful cry ('Oh let it be . . .') asks too much: 'that not one life should be destroyed,/Or cast as rubbish to the void' (LIV). Nature is 'careless of the single life', but 'so careful of the type' (hopes LV) . . .

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'So careful of the type?' but no,
From scarped cliff and quarried stone
She cries, 'A thousand types are gone:
I care for nothing, all shall go. (LVI)

A superb dramatization of the encounter of the individual consciousness and of the age with geological discovery—and too dramatic to be quite serious. It is less serious, for example, than the encounter in LVII with Catullus's 'terribly pathetic lines', 'Accipe fraterno multum manentia fletu,/atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale'. Tennyson noted, in one of his few willing acknowledgements of literary allusion, 'nor can any modern elegy, so long as men retain the least hope in the after-life of those whom they have loved, equal in pathos the desolation of that everlasting farewell'. This sequence, from the abolition of belief in immortality and reunion after death in the modern age (section LVI) to its acknowlegded absence in the past (section LVII)

And 'Ave, Ave, Ave,' said,
'Adieu, adieu' for evermore

marks a turn in the poem that was possible at one stage in its composition. Though it is nothing so mechanical as a 'switch' (as John Killham calls it in his contribution to the Sphere History of Victorian Literature), from this point immortality is taken for granted, not argued about. Tennyson refuses the turn from sorrow to rejoicing ('He is not dead!') but turns away ('Peace, come away . . .').

Here Culler's other major insight into this poem comes in useful: '*Im Memoriam* is also a sort of monodrama', like *Maud*. As in *Maud* 'different phases of passion in one person take the place of different characters', so in *In Memoriam* 'the different moods of sorrow as in a drama are dramatically given' (Tennyson's comments). Culler doesn't pursue this analogy with any close analysis of *In Memoriam*, but it does seem to be one principle for assessing the inequalities of achievement within the poem. Section LVI builds up into conscious and rhetorically accumulative hysteria, rather than the 'deepening and darkening experience' Culler finds there:

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And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seemed so fair . . .

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law—
Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieked against his creed—

Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or sealed within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream . . .

The crescendo needs to be shrieked aloud to establish its excess. It is immediately rebuked by the quiet and quieting voice of section LVII, 'Peace; come away . . . Come; let us go . . .'.

This dramatic quality, in which successive lyrics provide a criticism of each other, is obviously a product of putting together the poems in sequence: the tension between the intense individual poem and the slacker sequence ('With weary steps I loiter on') is always interesting, given that intimate and prolonged acquaintance with the whole which is so rarely accorded to it. Tennyson's diffidence is again in evidence: 'The general way of its being written was so queer that if there were a blank space I would put in a poem.' The Trinity Manuscript seemed to be coming to a natural close with LVII, with the recognition of absolute annihilation and a classic final farewell; but a few poems were added in a different ink; life and a new manuscript went on.

The monodramatic hypothesis suggested by the poem as finally put together at least suggests a redeeming case for Tennyson's taste and sensibility in setting side by side his most intense lyrics and his most banal, as in the belated insertion of VII between VI and VIII (it is not there in any of the manuscript sequences, nor in the trial edition). The way in which *To the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava* trembles on the brink of public pomposity and ludicrous bathos may be instructive here—intense grief registered a hairsbreadth away from a giggle. Sections VI and VIII suggest the charm-

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ing sentiment of Victorian anecdotal painting (and Culler, incidentally, gives a good account of Tennyson's interest in art, what he saw and where). In VIII the instant when the happy lover finds his loved one gone from home is frozen in pathetic cadence: 'He saddens', and the picture changes to the poet planting his poor flower of poesy on the loved one's tomb. A longer gallery of pictures has been exhibited in section VI: the father drinking to his son as he is shot elsewhere; the mother praying for her sailor son as he is lowered into the sea (the Shakespearian allusion, 'his vast and wandering grave' here recalls the quotations habitually appended to Victorian paintings); the golden-haired maiden poised 'once more to set a ringlet right' (with the loving detail and the contrapposto the Victorians imitated from the Renaissance masters)—

> And even when she turned, the curse
> Had fallen, and her future Lord
> Was drowned in passing through the ford,
> Or killed in falling from his horse.

That pivotal 'or' ('drowned . . . Or [say] killed . . .') enacts the shrug of real indifference: 'I hate the trim-set plots of art,' argues one voice in a rejected section. Included in the imaginary catalogue of clichés is the real: Tennyson writing a letter to Hallam as he died. But it remains a catalogue of commonplaces—so sad, so apt, so picturesque—and Tennyson, well aware of it, makes us aware:

> And common is the commonplace,
> And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

> That loss is common would not make
> My own less bitter, rather more:
> Too common! . . .

Section VII, 'Dark house . . .', one of the most bleakly intense lyrics, is set deliberately between these two banalities. Culler is surely wrong to speak of Tennyson here 'luxuriating in the emotions he ought to be assuaging'. The poem is a refusal of any comfort or luxury, even of versification. The alliteration of the last line, plodding against the halting metre, tells us nothing about the street but

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about the weary obligations of writing verse, the 'set mechanic exercise':

> And ghastly through the drizzling rain
> On the bald street breaks the blank day.

It is not the night and its ghosts that are ghastly, but the poet in daylight: as in section II, as in the best ghost stories (Henry James's *The Jolly Corner* for instance), the mind that imagines becomes more horrific than any of its imaginations. The terrors of the dreaming 'I' are set against the socially anecdotal commonplace. The apprehension of vastness, negation, emptiness is a recurrent aspect of Tennyson's dreaming and poetic consciousness—'larger than human passes by/The shadow of the man I loved'; 'A void, where heart on heart reposed'; 'An awful thought, a life removed'; 'thy dark freight, a vanished life'; where the weight and substance of 'freight' is negated by 'vanished' and the abstract 'life'. The many adjectives ending in '-less' in *In Memoriam* (dreamless, helmless, fruitless, countless, sightless) suggest absence, the horror of death and of life under the imagination of death. This horribly vague apprehension is set against that equally characteristic realization of states of consciousness through 'the intense use of atomistic detail', which, as Culler notes in his excellent analysis of *Mariana*, relates Tennyson to the pre-Raphaelites.

Such small dramas of choice in arranging the *In Memoriam* lyrics, with their implications of self-criticism, of continual re-testing of experience, are not what interests Professor Culler when he comes to *In Memoriam*. Critical analysis is abandoned for the familiar provision of a structure for the poem in terms of phases of thematic development. The resulting oncreep of boredom must be a criticism of the poem as well as of Professor Culler, though he provides—as scholarship so often does—fascinating excursions: for example into the wilder reaches of the contemporary 'science of imortality' and its speculations about the inhabitants of other worlds, even while he deprecates Tennyson's need to concern himself with such matters in his poem. It seems curious that he should take seriously Tennyson's notion of writing another poem giving 'the other side of the question': what new other side can be

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imagined except direct acknowledgement of that acceptance of earthy decay and absolute annihilation which is already implicit in the poem (sections II, VII and LVII)?

Professor Culler's book is slow, genial and scholarly. It is characteristic that he considers the English Idyls 'among the finest of Tennyson's poems, certainly the most neglected in proportion to their merit'. He admires them for their 'golden haze', the product less of the muse than of one who is 'bemused'—'poems . . . of the middle class'. At the same time, rather bemusingly, he defines their 'ironic juxtapositions and unresolved conflicts' as dry and classical, while speaking of them as sharing 'a spirit of reconciliation'. Who is reconciled by finding socialism and feminism approved in theory (for 'wildest dreams / Are but the needful prelude of the truth'), but continually pushed off for their realization in practice to 'some far after-time' as remote and wishful as reunion with the dead ('At last—far off—at last, to all')? The refusal to envisage any means to the end desired (in *The Golden Year* as in *Locksley Hall*, *The Princess* and the first version of *A Dream of Fair Women*) is understandable in the case of reunion after death, merely irritating in terms of social aims. The amiable liberal, John, in *Walking to the Mail* has no response but tolerant courtesy to the confident reactionary James; he will certainly conciliate and concede, as James will not.

This Idyl takes, as Culler says, a Virgilian theme in a Theocritean context—Chartist agitation and the Reform Bill taking the place of demobilization and dispossession in Virgil. The tales, the most vivid language and forceful reasoning, are all given to James. What Culler sees as an image of reconciliation—the ghost finally accepted into the family that was trying to flit from it—appears in James's first tale and serves to reinforce his later reasoning, that troubles can't be got rid of:

> . . . these two parties still divide the world—
> Of those that want, and those that have: and still
> The same old sore breaks out from age to age
> With much the same result . . .

His central story is of the souring of Sir Edward Head's wife 'to what she is'. She had married above her station,

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'the daughter of a cottager/Out of her sphere.' James's bitterness against her and her marriage receives a strange gloss in his last tale. As a schoolboy he, with his friends, had dragged a pregnant sow up to the college tower, 'up the corkscrew stair', where they took her new-born young one by one. So the pig becomes the 'Niobe of swine' who

> . . . but for this
> As never sow was higher in the world—
> Might have been happy: but what lot is pure?

James's vivid telling of the tale evokes the pity his indifference denies: the unstressed analogy with Sir Edward's wife is cruel but also, through the sense of the pig's suffering at the hands of the schoolboys, gives the poem's only hint of her suffering among the mature James and his like. This sense of cruelty is not calmed by John's mild and indirect rebuke, quickly dropped:

> As cruel as a schoolboy ere he grows
> To Pity—more from ignorance than will.
>
> But put your best foot forward . . .

What he has heard and not rejected is an ugly little prophetic myth of social and female aspiration, tied to a local contemporary judgement—'never sow was higher in the world'; what he is concerned about is tolerance for Sir Edward. Distress and anger are left hanging in the air as the pig is 'returned unfarrowed to her sty'. The conflict is not only unreconciled but unfought. Tennyson here rouses deeply troubling emotions and attitudes without committing himself anywhere; this too is treacherous. James's vigour is enjoyable: the manuscript corrections show a proliferation of venom cut down to harsh dismissive curtness: 'A woman like a fungus bloated white—/And harsh as verjuice, harsh to me, to all' becomes 'A woman like a butt and harsh as crabs'. The verbal, narrative appeal—*ad hominem, ad feminam*—cannot work without engaging the deepest personal and social feelings, in terms of which Tennyson dodges, not reconciles.

Professor Culler's scholarship is continually useful, as in the histories of prosopopoeia and monodrama, or the

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claim for Tennyson as a Victorian Alexandrian which relates, for example, the great monologues to Alexandrian use of the margins of epic and myth. He 'places' Tennyson in literary tradition and in the context of contemporary writing, while trying to give a similarly coherent order to the way his work and his idea of it developed. *In Memoriam* is related to the straying Thoughts, Aids, Hints and Guesses of contemporary theological meditators (Coleridge, Keble, Julius and Augustus Hare). With a more modish air Culler sees the various phases of Tennyson's poetry as representing successive images of the poet—as prophetic youth on the mountain top, priest of the power of the word; as the now rather shop-worn high-born maiden; even as the Kraken (a 'subaqueous dying swan') roaring out his anger, as the Lady of Shalott chaunted out her grief, at being wakened from deep poetic slumbers to the deathly world of daily life. *In Memoriam* is claimed as similarly self-referential—'every phase in the evolution of grief is parallelled by a comparable phase in the evolution of the poetic imagination', though this claim is hardly demonstrated. The *Idylls of the King—Guinevere* and *Merlin and Vivien* at least—are about the failure of poetry in the modern world: it is 'a triumph only because it sings so seductively the story of its own demise'. Here Culler is good on Tennyson's diffidence ('I would be crazed to attempt such a thing in the heart of the nineteenth century'; 'The old writers *believed* in the Sangreal') and contrasts the early Romantic confidence: in the old days Tennyson felt no need 'to assert that the three Hesperides were three African ladies who had a pet lizard'. Now Merlin is a nineteenth-century rationalizer, the quest for the Holy Grail a study in mass hysteria. Possibly Tennyson's success in the middle class of poems, the quiescent uncommitted English Idyls, helps explain his failure to revive heroics: while romantic novelists like Rider Haggard were soon to find scope for heroes in the Empire, Tennyson telescopes Arthur's battles; most of the idylls are placed in the time of decline.

Professor Culler displays a kindly desire to keep up to date—when his students turned into lotos-eaters he had to revise his teaching of the poem if not his own judgement—

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but the sequence of images of the poet which provides the structure of his book provokes wonderment as to what Tennyson would have made of it, as of the parade of pictures of him that Mr Henderson provides. Tennyson was much given to crying, 'I never!' like a schoolboy dodging incrimination—'. . . I never even called him dear'. Holman Hunt's contributions to the 1857 illustrated edition provoked a flurry of such denials: 'I never said that there was a lot of steps, I only meant one or two . . . I daresay I did, but I never said I got it from the ballad . . . *two* steps at the outside', or, on *The Lady of Shalott*, 'I never said the young woman's hair was flying all over the shop . . .'. Tennyson, I imagine, would have bridled in the same way at the equation of his poetic self with the isolated lamenting high-born maiden; though I suppose the critic is free to answer back like Hunt, 'No, but you never said it wasn't'.

Poetry, like all language, speaks of itself no matter what else it is speaking of. Beneath his treacherousness there is an integrity in Tennyson which in the face of the demands made on him he rarely thought it worthwhile to speak out: 'The thought within the image is more important than any interpretation of it'; 'Poetry is like shot-silk, of many glancing colours, and every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability and according to his sympathy with the poet'. Art may not be directly and obviously serviceable and responsible, though it *is* directly provoking. Tennyson's aversion of his gaze from his own image in the public eye; his awkwardness in the role of patriotic prophet, backsliding from confident assertion; his incapacity for posing as dandy or desperate man—his artful dodging in fact—liberate the poetry and the reader who encounters it freshly.

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APPREHENDING HARDY

An Essay on Hardy. By JOHN BAYLEY. Cambridge University Press, 1978; £6.95.

Thomas Hardy. By LANCE ST JOHN BUTLER. Cambridge University Press, 1978; £7.50, paperback £2.95.

Thomas Hardy After Fifty Years. Edited by LANCE ST JOHN BUTLER. Macmillan, 1977; £7.95.

The browser who opened John Bayley's book at the page on which he suggests that *The Hand of Ethelberta* and *A Laodicean* are 'more characteristic, more concentratedly Hardyan' than *Tess* and *Jude* would, one hopes, be intrigued to discover the train of reasoning leading to this remarkable and heretical judgment. He would find it only the first of many rich provocations in this spacious meditation on the nature of Hardy's uniqueness. The more so if he had just previously picked up Lance St John Butler's wholly unremarkable introductory study and lighted on one of the tedious propositions about the great novels, as for instance that they achieve a 'perfect integration' between Hardy's three great themes of love, nature and cosmic vision of life.

'Integration', however, according to Bayley and many of the best contributors to the volume of essays which Butler himself has edited, is exactly what Hardy does *not* offer us. Things and people and ways of writing about them do not fit, let alone fuse together in Hardy. They remain discrete, they retain their integrity. Of course Tess is pure. However brutally she is touched, she remains, like everything else, intact. Even the light that seems to penetrate can never in fact pierce the surface, however deep into her hair it carries us. Just as the wind in *The Return of the Native* that sweeps into the heath-bells and scours them and sweeps away repeats this endless failure, to reach and split open a true interior. In one of his many glancing comparisons. Bayley notes that Hardy shares with Keats an extraordinary ability to encompass the physical 'in all its awkwardness and richness'. For Hardy, the sense of the impassable, exquisitely tender skin deepens his awkward and rich sense of privacy.

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On many aspects of Hardy's art Bayley is wonderfully convincing, about the way it flourishes in the sense of separateness. That, for instance, 'A Procession of Dead Days' is a poem of 'extraordinary happiness' in the feeling of each day's fortunate independence from and obliviousness to every other. And that Hardy's humour derives from the perfect arbitrariness of every contiguity and juxtaposition in life. And that the fluctuating concentration and nonchalance of his language grows from this sense that, given the separateness of words from their referents and from each other, any particular concatenation is going to be more or less of a hazard.

So that any sense we may make of the world's phenomena is bound to be provisional and tentative and optional. Bayley makes a fine distinction between the placid, reluctant treachery of Hardy's indeterminacy and that of the modern novelist's more frontal assault. It is with an unprecedented delicacy that he describes the way in which Hardy refuses to own his characters or his landscapes or his language, while avoiding the churlishness of actively disowning them. Those casually available eyes, for instance, through which we find ourselves looking. They might belong to anyone, like a pair of spectacles that have been left lying around and that anyone might pick up. Henry James would insist that they belonged to someone—does not everything belong to *somebody*?—for if they don't, they soon will. So that loss, for Hardy, does not really enter into it. There never was in the first place anything truly credible about the illusion of possessing this thing, this self, this memory. He never expected much.

One can imagine a lot of critics labouring this point about the absence of centres and sources and homes in Hardy. Bayley puts it all very finely, the absence of the sense of privilege on which most novelists depend, even or especially in their enunciation of it. It is the attitude he finds characteristic of the poetry too. Of 'Neutral Tones', for example, he writes:

> Such a poem has no centre in the poet, or his dramatised representative, with components grouped to lead all our attention back to him. Here he is only one among

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> a number of characters, who may be 'persons', 'things' . . . the 'I' is not the determinant of the poem, in which its events and conclusions are resolved.

Of the different kinds of discourse in the novels, he suggests that it cannot be irony with which we are faced, since we are forced to recognize the impossibility of one voice even listening to another, let alone responding. Indeed Hardy may 'create' a character in one way and talk about him in quite another, and our sense of the reality of the character may actually be reinforced by the irrelevance and gratuitousness of the commentary.

So it is that Bayley founds his argument on what he takes to be Hardy's own deepest feelings, of the indifference with which people and things and experiences turn away from each other.

> The text is like a landscape of which the constituent parts—cows, birds, trees, grass—pay no attention one to another, although they appear as a total composition to the beholder, the reader.

The 'sense of repose' we discover in Hardy comes from the sense of relief, our relief at things standing out in relief from each other. So far from a 'modernist' sense of anguish at the inherent separateness of every thing from everything else, it is only through the factitious effort to pressurize things into significant union that anguish is felt. Thus the anguish of *Tess* and *Jude*, where Hardy is forcing himself to feel a pain which his deepest allegiances refuse to acknowledge.

Bayley has a characteristically memorable phrase about 'the perverse way in which his [Hardy's] effectiveness creeps round normal standards of judgment'. But we may feel that his own perversity does not creep quite as effectively round the orthodox judgment, that while disregard for co-ordination in some of the supposedly lesser novels may indeed be distinctively Hardyan, this does not necessarily turn it into a positive or unequivocal virtue. I remain bewildered, for instance, by the contention that the hero and heroine of *A Laodicean* 'remain suitably unrealized and negative figures, who are none the less remarkably alive in terms of

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the novel's negative form'. Nor am I persuaded by Bayley's general proposition that a writer's essential virtue resides in his uniqueness, *even* when this manifests itself as a unique, according to 'normal standards of judgment', badness. This does not entail disagreement with his suggestion that 'Hardy's selfhood, like that of Keats, seems helplessly all of a piece'. But it does mean dissenting from his curiously selective portrayal of that selfhood, in which liberating, anaesthetic delight in the separateness of every thing from everything else is warmly approved, at the expense of the fierce, hopeless desire that some of the meetings between life's things, human beings for instance, might not be wholly meaningless.

But it is, according to Bayley, precisely when Hardy is gripped by this desire, when he tries too hard to make things fit and to force conclusions, that he loses his most characteristic virtue of tranquillity. It is this virtue that is increasingly strangled in the later novels.

> Separation is again a key, but now its equanimity is lost: Hardy's apprehensions of Tess *do* seem uneasily aware of each other, and of their relational liabilities.

This is of course not a local perversity; it is at the core of Bayley's argument. Near the start of the book, we find the following astonishing passage.

> In the epoch in which Marx and Engels were proclaiming the contradictions in the individual situation, and assuming their removal in a just society, Hardy's art quietly presents such contradictions as being what life is all about. Who wants to live without contradictions in their situation?

In the course of the book this attitude displays itself as a calculated indifference on Bayley's own part, to the possibility that some kinds of contradiction or separateness or indeed indifference might be more intolerable than others. It is all very well for *cows* to go on munching in benign indifference to each other. Of course some contradictions are reassuring or invigorating. And some rip people's lives apart.

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So that there is a tinge of indignation in Bayley's reaction to the demands that Hardy imposes on the reader through Tess's discontinuities. 'Tess is born discontinuous because Hardy makes it so'. (Let me note, in passing, that Bayley says some very suggestive things about the form of each particular novel deriving from the distinctive apprehension of the central female character.) It is true that Tess is never 'realised', that the various elements and visions we are given never achieve an identity. She is always different. And it is true that Hardy has repeatedly exposed the artifices by which we seek to compose unity and continuity, fusing one thing into another in a chain of 'meaning'. But that human beings should go on *desiring*, hopelessly, seemed to Hardy a given, *the* given condition. There is no equanimity in the cry 'Would God it came to pass/My heart had shrunk as thin!' Tess is never resolved into identity, not because it is her nature, but because she never finds anyone to love her enough, to give her the assurance that she gives to Angel: 'Having begun to love 'ee, I love 'ee for ever—in all changes, in all disgraces, because you are yourself'. Does not the reader too, in his own hopeless way, try to do just this—impossibly, love her *enough*?

Bayley's reading of Hardy is based on a long and absorbed saturation, and this raises some familiar questions about the kind of authority we accord to different readings, whether our own or others', in which what is exhilarating on first acquaintance recedes or coarsens later on.

His text may come increasingly to strike us as an affair of collaterals, effects not isolated from but independent of each other, with a purpose and intentness of their own.

One can be grateful to Bayley for persuading us of the 'sense of repose' in Hardy, while not wishing yet, if ever, to relinquish one's feelings of astonishment or panic at what are still powerful and often flagrant disturbances. For the sense of repose seems to me not a fundamental quality in Hardy's art, so much as a necessary component. It is a respite, that exists only in relation and reaction to the primary experience of *motion*. Bayley's deepest feelings are engaged by the intervals that divide, the space between things. In so far as he acknowledges movement in the text,

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it is invariably the movement of one thing away from another. That respite, that cooling 'disappointment' he describes so well, is no more essential to Hardy than its obstinate predecessor—and successor—the compulsion to draw near. Things and people are not still in Hardy, they are constantly moving towards or away from each other—towards the excruciating moment, so far beyond mere pleasure or pain, in which the two touch. Of course Hardy could not bear to be touched.

About the requirements of movement Bayley is strangely lukewarm, while he can become quite enthusiastic about the stillness of cows in a field, or plants in a wood at night. It is characteristic of Hardy, though not the Hardy that Bayley portrays, that he should have been attracted to the image of a '*locomotive* plant' to describe the movement of 'our evil actions' spreading and re-rooting. But it is precisely movement, constant movement, that Hardy forces on the reader, and that Bayley is reluctant to characterize in any but its more tranquil forms. His fine discussion of the scene in *Desperate Remedies* in which Cytherea Graye's father falls from the tower places a rare emphasis on the kind of displacement which for many readers will appear more truly essential to Hardy's art: 'the switch from the passive contemplation of the aesthetic to the brute irruption of fact'.

Hardy insists that we attend to the ways in which we compose order, fixity, 'meaning'. Only to remind us, with a disarming shrug, that the figure on Rainbarrow has moved, wrecking the picture, or that the earth beneath us is spinning through space, or that the eyes through which we look are imperceptibly dimming. Bayley is wonderfully adroit at describing Hardy's refusals to finish, or to be finished off. But Bayley too, we may feel, is no more free than the rest of us from the tug of the doctrinaire, when in the odd diversion he reveals his notions about what does, or ought to, constitute 'freedom', for instance.

Of all novelists he owes most to a society which, whatever it exacted in the way of conformity, licensed its members to protect and compartmentalise their lives; while at the same time it extended the maximum credulity to the authenticity of their creations.

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Or, more mischievously, what does, or ought to, constitute the experience of 'class'.

> Ultimately, class in England has become a matter of preferring to keep yourself to yourself, a privilege Hardy made the most of, just as he did of its other advantage: feeling romantic about the members of another class.

Whatever one's disagreements, Bayley's book is on every page vital with argument and allusion and nuance. Butler's book is numb with commonplace, enlivened, if that is the word, by the repetitive assertion that at its least felicitous emerges as: 'Love is a big hook that brings everything else up with it'. But the volume of essays he has edited is much livelier. His own contribution, unshackled by the constraints imposed on his full-length book, yet another 'introduction' to Hardy, is sufficiently typical of the best contributors' concern with conflict and division and irresolution in Hardy. In different ways, Butler, Fowles, Kinkead-Weekes, Alexander, Irwin and Gregor, examine the ways in which Hardy refused to conclude. Michael Alexander writes well of Hardy's deliberate avoidance of 'finish', of the 'latent, unassertive, optional' quality of his poetry. Kinkead-Weekes make some nice discriminations about the relation between Hardy and Lawrence, and the former's incalculably greater tolerance for the unresolved. In one of the best essays, on *Desperate Remedies* and *The Well-Beloved*, Michael Irwin and Ian Gregor strike a good balance in defining the role of design in Hardy, that element which Bayley has chosen to deprecate as the shallower, more ephemeral counterpart to Hardy's extraordinary sense of heterogeneity. John Fowles takes a different view, that design provided Hardy with a means of failing. He not only needed but was positively addicted to the doomed pursuit of a consummation that must always end in failure. Buoyed up by some lurid generalizations, Fowles suggests that Hardy's 'violent distaste for resolution or consummation' confirms the novelist's deepest need, the license to indulge the compulsion to repeat.

We may wish to settle for something between Bayley's repose and Fowles's violence. We may remember the child, the young Hardy, whom the *Life* records as being moved

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to dance by the unbearable touch of music. It is not only, as Bayley suggests, in the disembarrassment of untouching and stillness that we find relief. Eustacia Vye retraces her steps to have her hair combed, again, by the Ulex Europaeus. And in the repeated movements of Hardy's art, there is also a relief. The child danced on, to conceal his weeping.

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AUDEN PRE-WAR

The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings 1927–1939. Edited by EDWARD MENDELSON. Faber and Faber, 1977; £8.95.

It is surprising, in an age when great British poets are not too thick on the ground, that Auden, though horizontal and honoured is not valued at home any more than when he was vertical—except, perhaps, by those who came to the original party. I expect that this is still to do with his leaving this island in 1939; like Mauberley in one of his versions.

He passed from men's memory in *l'an trenteuneiesme*
De son eage.

The English Auden prints all the poems Auden published in England before he went to New York, including poems from plays, together with a selection from his essays and reviews of the thirties. The poems are in chronological order and the text is (N.B.) 'in the form it reached in 1939'. Edward Mendelson, Auden's literary executor, adds: 'The present edition and the *Collected Poems* thus reprint between them all the separable poems that Auden published in book form. In excerpting from the plays I have followed the example set by Auden in his 1938 *Selected Poems*; a complete edition of the plays and libretti is in preparation.' Thus, with the *Collected Poems*, this volume supersedes the *Collected Longer Poems* and the incomplete and heavily revised *Collected Shorter Poems*. It has good texts, produced on an intelligible principle and in chrono-

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logical order, handsomely printed (unlike the *Collected Poems*) and virtually complete. With a crisp informative introduction, a sensible minimum of critical apparatus, and a skilful selection from the contemporary prose, *The English Auden* offers a useful framework for considering as well as reading the early Auden. I am no expert on Auden's bibliography, yet Mr Mendelson has my confidence. As Auden continuously revised the texts, particularly of his most successful early poems, the overlap between *The English Auden* and the *Collected Poems* allows us to read early and later versions. It is good to have the best of both worlds provided so unobtrusively—a neat solution of the problem of Auden's famously drastic revisions and excisions. Auden-followers will know that Mr Mendelson announced his plans for publishing *The English Auden* alongside the *Collected Poems* in his 'Note on Auden's Text' in Stephen Spender's 1974 collection *W. H. Auden, A Tribute*. It would surely be sensible for Mr Mendelson or his publishers once more to explain this plan, and the reasons for it, in subsequent editions of *The English Auden*. Otherwise readers may imagine, as for a moment I innocently did, that an *American Auden* will one day be appearing, followed perhaps by *Another English Auden*. It would be as well, in an age where hard-pressed poets and their publishers so frequently produce re-hashes of available work in order further to encumber the shelves of librarians, to make the rationale and relationship of these two volumes as clear as possible. As it is, the chosen solution of following the publication of a finally revised *Collected* volume with an (overlapping) unrevised *English* volume is potentially confusing. Also, the title of *The English Auden* memorably institutionalizes a division in Auden's work which, as time passes, may come to seem less important. Already we can see how apolitical the political Auden could be. As the thirties fade, the unity, integrity and coherence of Auden's evolution will more naturally appear. Indeed, the only criticism I have of *The English Auden* is that its neat title may perpetuate the partition of his career.

At the time, of course, Auden regarded the move to New York as a complete break, perhaps even a *metanoia*. He

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changed his nationality and the way he pronounced his long *a*, as well as things more serious still. As Mr Mendelson's Preface makes clear, he escaped from 'his public role as court poet to the left', which 'he had begun to find intolerable' (p. xix). Leaving behind him the expired hopes of a low, dishonest decade, he was able to find himself again and to write his way into a new relationship with the 'Vision of Agape' recorded in 'Out on the lawn I lie in bed'. The poetic benefits of this liberation were enormous, and I am sure that British readers have much to understand about the middle and later, if not the latest, Auden. But that he was reborn a different person with different poetic gifts in 1939 is not one of them. New York cut the string or strings, but Auden, *pace* a possible implication of this title, remained noticeably English.

In the admirable contents of *The English Auden* there is little that is unfamiliar, yet the cumulated effect is of a remarkable body of achievement in twelve years. I am glad to be without the plays but equally glad to have the selection of prose—a hundred pages of it—to set off the verse. To describe the 'English' poetry as a body of achievement may seem premature, since the achievement is the whole output, the whole career. Yet this volume contains his most exciting and dramatic poetry, although the majority of his best poems were yet to be written. Since to admire Auden is often to be misunderstood, I may say that I accept Auden as a poet of great achievement rather than mere promise, but do not limit the achievement to the period when he was most glaringly promising, nor deny the promise that always played about the middle style.

A great advantage in reading early Auden in this edition is afforded by the light cast by the prose on the poetry. Some of this prose was previously unpublished, and most of the rest not easily available outside research libraries. Much of it illuminates the poetry directly. Thus, the 1929 Journal entries clarify the thinking that provides the somatic imagery in some early poems. 'The Public v. the late Mr. William Butler Yeats' spells out in detail the argument of 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' that 'poetry makes nothing happen'. Likewise the extracts from the unpublished book written in 1939 make it clear how complete

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was the liberal's disillusioned rejection of any socialist or propaganda role for the artist. More generally illuminating are the larger essays such as 'Psychology and Art To-day', 'The Good Life' and the contribution to 'I Believe'. The imperial scope of such essays is both impressive and slightly absurd. A random example: 'Of the earliest artists, the palaeolithic rock-drawers, we can of course know nothing for certain, but it is generally agreed that . . .'. I have always been alarmed by Auden's acceptance, however short-lived, of the psychosomatic ideas of 'loony Layard'. The youthful encyclopaedist can, however, be equally disarming: 'The success of the youngest son in folk tales is instructive. He is generally his mother's favourite as physically weaker and less assertive than his brothers. If he is often called stupid, his stupidity is physical. He is clumsy and lazy rather than dull. (Clumsiness being due to the interference of fancies with sense data.) He succeeds partly out of good nature and partly because confronted with a problem he overcomes it by understanding rather than with force.' Also from 'Psychology and Art To-day', less self-revealing and more clearly a parody of his own habit of oversimplication, is his list of popular misconceptions about Freud's beliefs:

'1. Sexual pleasure is the only real satisfaction. (All other activities are an inadequate and remote substitute.)
2. All reasoning is rationalization.
3. All men are equal before instincts. It is my parent's fault in the way they brought me up if I am not a Napoleon or a Shakespeare.
4. The good life is to do as you like.
5. The cure for all ills is (*a*) indiscriminate sexual intercourse; (*b*) autobiography.'

All these efforts to classify, condense and combine diverse bodies of material, although they involve premature generalization and the vices that Johnson found in the metaphysical poets, are finally impressive in their tendency: the impulse to aphorism is self-instructive and ethical, not exhibitionist. The constant intake and re-expression of ideas was all by way of making sense of a life lived and seen from an eccentric and often isolated psychological and

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social standpoint. It is good to see how much fun Auden was able to find in it all.

On the Prose Selections, Edward Mendelson says: 'The versatile and integrated prose style familiar from Auden's later books is a product of his American years. During the thirties he had not yet developed the coherent vision of literature and society that made such a style possible. Therefore any selection—or even a complete reprinting—of Auden's early prose will have a somewhat miscellaneous air.' This is characteristic of Mr Mendelson's authority, and applies to the poetic as well as to the prose style; I like the coupling of 'versatile' with 'integrated'. It is sometimes said that as Auden found coherent resolution of some of the youthful conflicts recorded in *The English Auden*, his verse lost its drama, resonance and fire. It is a charge that can be brought against other poets, especially since Wordsworth, and it is an intelligible criticism. Yet there is no answer to the reader who prefers intensity and the pressure of personal experience above all other virtues; to him all reasoning is rationalization. In a later essay Eliot talks of the 'luxury of confusing' images as opposed to the 'labour of combining' them. I am persuaded that the integration achieved in 'Lay your sleeping head, my love' (1937) and the clarity in 'Musée des Beaux Arts' (1938) are compensation enough for the diminution in local *éclat* from the time of 'It was Easter as I walked in the public gardens' (1929). Integration and clarity, without loss of versatility and linguistic resource, are rare and necessary poetic virtues in a post-diluvian age where there are many pseudo-Giants stamping around in the mud.

In looking around for, and failing to find, a way of concluding this review by briefly defining Auden's poetic style and his continuing deployment and use of his marvellous gift, I found comfort in two critical efforts to engage with this problem, John Bayley's 'Only Critics Can't Play' in Spender's *W. H. Auden, a Tribute*) and Ronald Carter's more modestly specific piece on 'City Without Walls' in *Agenda*, Vol. 16, No. 2. Professor Bayley identifies a public intimacy in Auden's style, a communing quality that can include lightness and objectivity, the cosy and the authoritative. Mr Carter takes us down to the grammar. Both men-

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tion the extent to which Auden's mind seems to play with and dominate his material. As a reader, one is always aware that this is an Auden poem, although paradoxically his personality also respects the identity of his material and his materials. This personality and craftsmanlike modesty make his individual works less definitive and sublime than those of those great moderns to whom, as an undergraduate, I could not assimilate him. Yet it offers also a more human and usable model of style.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

University of Stirling

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ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

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Vol. XXIX July 1979 No. 3

CRITICAL OPINION

The Idea of a Cultural Lexicon

QUENTIN SKINNER

IN THIS contribution to 'Critical Opinion' I should like to consider some of the issues raised by Raymond Williams's *Keywords*. I do not intend, however, merely to offer a belated review of the book, especially as it has already received at least its fair share of critical acclaim. Instead I want to focus on one highly general question raised by this *genre* of literary and social criticism as a whole. I want to ask what exactly we can hope to learn about our culture and society through studying the changing meanings of words.

Although the whole of Williams's book is in effect concerned with this theme, he offers us little more than portentous arm-waving whenever he attempts (as in his Introduction) to confront the question directly. A study of 'variations and confusions of meaning', he suggests, may help us to understand matters of 'historical and contemporary substance' (p. 21).[1] If we take 'certain words at the level at which they are generally used' and scrutinize their developing 'structures of meaning', we may be able 'to contribute certain kinds of awareness' to existing social debates, and in particular an 'extra edge of consciousness' (pp. 20–1). But what precise kinds of 'awareness' can we expect to acquire if we study the history of key words? And how should we conduct our investigations in order to ensure that this awareness is duly acquired? These are the questions I should like to examine at somewhat greater length.

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I

Before proceeding, however, we need if possible to neutralize one serious doubt. It might be objected that, in singling out 'a shared body of words', Williams has chosen the wrong unit of analysis altogether (p. 13). His aim, he tells us, is to illuminate 'ways not only of discussing but of seeing many of our central experiences' (pp. 12–13). But if we wish to grasp how someone sees the world—what distinctions they draw, what classifications they accept—what we need to know is not what words they use but rather what concepts they possess.

It is true that this objection may appear a purely verbal one. For it might be replied—and the claim has often been made—that possessing a concept is equivalently a matter of knowing the meaning of a word. This certainly seems to be Williams's own view, for in discussing the term 'nature' he equates 'the word and the concept', and in speaking of 'democracy' he explains how the 'concept' is 'embodied' in the word (pp. 84, 189).

However, to argue for any such equivalence is undoubtedly a mistake. First of all, it cannot be a necessary condition of my possessing a concept that I need to understand the correct application of a corresponding term. Suppose, for example, that I am studying Milton's thought, and want to know whether Milton considered it important that a poet should display a high degree of originality. The answer seems to be that he felt it to be of the greatest importance. For when he spoke of his own aspirations at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*, what he particularly emphasized was his decision to deal with 'things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme'. But I could never have arrived at this conclusion by examining Milton's use of the word 'originality'. For while the concept was clearly central to his thought, the word did not enter the language until a century or more after his death. Although a history of the word 'originality' and its various uses could undoubtedly be written (and Williams provides a sketch of one at pp. 192–3), such a survey would by no means be the same as a history of the concept of originality.

Moreover, it cannot be a sufficient condition of my possessing a concept that I understand the correct application

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of a corresponding term. There is still the possibility (explored by Wittgenstein as well as Kant) that I may believe myself to be in possession of a concept when this belief is in fact mistaken. Consider for example the difficulties raised by certain highly general terms such as 'being' or 'infinity'. A whole community of language-users may be capable of applying these terms with complete consistency. Yet it might be possible to show that there is simply no concept which answers to any of their agreed usages.

What then is the relationship between concepts and words? We can scarcely hope to capture the answer in a single formula, but I think we can at least say this: the surest sign that a group or society has entered into the self-conscious possession of a new concept is that a corresponding vocabulary will be developed, a vocabulary which can then be used to pick out and discuss the concept with consistency. This suggests that, while we certainly need to exercise more caution than Williams does in making inferences from the use of words to the understanding of concepts and back again, there is nevertheless a systematic relationship between words and concepts to be explored. For the possession of a concept will at least *standardly* be signalled by the employment of a corresponding term. As long as we bear in mind that 'standardly' means neither necessarily nor sufficiently, I think we may legitimately proceed.

II

If our aim is to illuminate ideological disputes through the study of linguistic disagreements, the first issue we need to clarify—as Williams acknowledges—is obviously this: what exactly are we debating about a word when we find ourselves debating whether or not it ought to be applied as a description of a particular action or state of affairs?

Unfortunately Williams's own answer is confusingly vague. 'What is really happening' in such encounters, he claims, is a 'process' whereby 'meanings are offered' and are then 'confirmed, qualified, changed' (p. 10). All such debates are thus taken to be about 'meanings'; about the 'available and developing meanings' of the words involved (pp. 13, 19, 20). Not only does Williams go no further in analysing

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what he has in mind when he states that his 'whole enquiry' is concerned with 'meanings and connections of meaning' (p. 23); he also implies that no further analysis would be likely to be worthwhile. For he tells us that, after considering various other ways of organizing his materials, he eventually decided that a purely alphabetical arrangement of his 'keywords' would not only be the simplest classification but also the best (pp. 22–3).

This question-begging tendency to speak without further explication about 'changes of meaning' is due, I believe, to the fact that Williams at no point tries to isolate and describe the class of terms in which he is chiefly interested —the class of what he calls the 'strong' or 'persuasive' words, the words 'which involve ideas and values' (pp. 12, 15). No consistent account of how certain words come to 'involve values' is ever presented. At different times we are told that they somehow carry moral or political *implications* (p. 93) or *associations* (p. 71) or even *tensions* and *pressures* (pp. 110, 142); elsewhere we are told that they have *meanings* or *senses* which are 'positive' or 'negative', 'dignifying' or 'derogatory' in addition to their ordinary 'neutral sense' (pp. 34, 47, 61, 68, 93, etc.). Nor does Williams ever make it clear whether he thinks of such terms as bearing a 'single proper meaning' (p. 132) which is subject to ideological deformation, or whether he believes that the very attempt to establish 'fixed meanings' must itself be the outcome of a prior ideological commitment. At one point he warns us against the confusions that are bound to arise from the 'pseudo-authoritative application of one fixed sense' to a 'highly variable word' (p. 90). But later he objects with no less vehemence to the tendency for evaluative words 'to be wrenched from' their proper 'meaning or significance' (p. 279).

It seems clear, then, that if any further progress is to be made in discussing the phenomenon of meaning-change in ideological debates, we need to begin by offering some further analysis of the special class of words involved—the words that are said to 'involve ideas and values'. This is a less Herculean task than might be supposed, for it happens that a great deal of attention has lately been paid by theorists of language as well as moral philosophers to isolating

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and commenting on precisely these terms.[2] Drawing on their accounts, we may say, I think, that three main requirements need to be met if such terms are to be understood and correctly applied.

First of all, it is necessary to know the nature and range of the criteria in virtue of which the word or expression is standardly employed. Suppose, for example, that I am unaware of the meaning of the appraisive term 'courageous', and ask someone to explain to me how to use the word properly. They will most naturally reply by mentioning various criteria that serve to mark off the word from similar and contrasting adjectives, and so provide it with its distinctive role in our language of social description and appraisal. When listing these criteria, they will surely have to include at least the following: that the word can only be used in the context of voluntary actions; that the actor involved must have faced some danger; that he must have faced it with some consciousness of its nature; and that he must have faced it heedfully, with some sense of the probable consequences of the action involved. Summarising these criteria (in what is only apparently a tautology), we may say that the conditions under which the term 'courageous' can be applied are such that the action involved must have been a courageous one.

Next, to apply a appraisive term correctly I also need to know its range of reference. I need, that is, to have a clear sense of the nature of the circumstances in which the word can properly be used to designate particular actions or states of affairs. Now the concept of reference has often been taken to be an aspect or feature of the meaning of a word. But it is perhaps more helpful to treat the understanding of the reference of a word as a consequence of understanding the criteria for applying it correctly. To grasp these criteria is to understand the sense of a word, its role in the language, and thus its correct use. Once I have acquired this understanding, I may expect in consequence to be able to exercise the further and more mysterious skill of relating the word to the world. I may expect, for example, to be able to pick out just those actions which are properly to be called courageous, and to discuss the sort of circumstances in which we might wish to apply that

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particular description, or might wonder whether we ought to apply it rather than another one. For instance, someone might call it courageous if I faced a painful death with cheerfulness. However, it might be objected that strictly speaking no danger is involved in such circumstances, and thus that we ought not to speak of courage but rather of fortitude. Or again, someone might call it courageous if I stepped up from the circus audience to deputise for the lion tamer. But it might be countered that this is such a heedless action that it ought not to be viewed as courage but rather as sheer recklessness. Both these arguments are about the reference (but not the meaning) of 'courageous': both are concerned with whether a given set of circumstances—what a lawyer would call the facts of the case—are such as to yield the agreed criteria for the application of the given appraisive term.

To apply any word to the world, we need to have a clear grasp of both its sense and its reference. But in the case of appraisive terms a further element of understanding is also required. We need in addition to know what exact range of attitudes the term can standardly be used to express. (To adopt J. L. Austin's jargon: it is necessary to know what type of speech-acts the word can be used to perform). For example, no one can be said to have grasped the correct application of the adjective 'courageous' if they are unaware that it is standardly used to commend, to express approval, and especially to express (and solicit) admiration for any action it is used to describe. To call an action courageous is at once to describe it and to place it in a specific moral light. Thus I can praise or rejoice at an action by calling it courageous, but I cannot condemn or sneer at it by describing it in this way.

If these are the three main things we need to know in order to isolate the class of appraisive terms and apply them correctly, we can now return to the question raised at the beginning of this section. I asked what we might be debating about a 'keyword' if we found ourselves asking whether or not it ought to be applied in a particular case. As we have seen, Williams's answer is that such arguments must be about the senses or meanings of the words involved. As I have sought to show, however, we might be

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disagreeing about one of at least three different things, not all of which are self-evidently disagreements about meaning: we might be arguing about the criteria for applying the word; or about whether the agreed criteria are present in a given set of circumstances; or about what range of speech-acts the word can be used to perform.

III

So far I have tried to isolate the main debates that arise over the application of our appraisive vocabulary to our social world. I now turn to what I take to be the crucial question: in what sense are these linguistic disagreements also disagreements about our social world itself?

I have suggested that one type of argument over appraisive terms centres on the criteria for applying them. Now this is certainly a substantive social debate as well as a linguistic one. For it can equally well be characterized as an argument between two rival social theories and their attendant methods of classifying social reality.

As an illustration of such a dispute, recall the way in which Marcel Duchamp liked to designate certain familiar objects (coat-pegs, lavatory bowls) as works of art, thereby causing them to be framed and hung on the walls of galleries. Some critics have accepted that these are indeed significant works of art, on the grounds that they help us to sharpen and extend our awareness of everyday things. Others have insisted that they are not works of art at all, on the grounds that we cannot simply *call* something a work of art, since works of art have to be deliberately created.

This disagreement arises at the linguistic level. It centres on whether or not a certain criterion (the exercise of skill) should or should not be regarded as a necessary condition for the correct application of a particular appraisive term ('a work of art'). But this is certainly a substantive social dispute as well. For what is at issue is whether or not a certain range of objects ought or ought not to be treated as having a rather elevated status and significance. And it is obvious that a great deal may depend on how this question is answered.

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A number of the arguments in *Keywords* are primarily of this character. For example, the essays on 'literature' and 'science' largely fit this analysis, as does the useful discussion of 'the unconscious', where Williams actually points out that 'different theories' have generated 'confusion between different senses' of the term (p. 272). Moreover, Williams is surely right to claim that in these cases the argument is in fact about the senses or meanings of the words involved. It is true that powerful voices have lately been raised against the contention that, if we introduce a new theory relating to a given subject-matter (for example, what constitutes a work of art) this will inevitably give rise to changes in the meanings of the constitutive terms.[3] And there is little doubt that Feyerabend and other post-empiricists have tended to employ this assumption with an altogether excessive enthusiasm. Certainly we cannot readily say that every change of theory brings about a change in the meaning of all the words involved. (If only because nouns and adjectives shift in meaning so much more readily than, say, conjunctions). Moreover, it seems unduly anarchistic to claim that the meaning of a word must have changed if we simply change our beliefs about whatever the word is customarily used to denote. (Although it is admittedly very hard to think of clear cases in which meanings have in fact remained constant in the face of changing beliefs.)[4] However, it does seem that if someone is mistaken about the criteria for applying a term, then they cannot be said to know its current meaning. And since I have argued that the question of whether Duchamp's coat-peg is a work of art is (at one level) an argument about the criteria for applying the term 'a work of art', I agree with Williams that in this type of argument about 'keywords' the disagreement really is about the meaning of the word concerned.

What Williams misses, however, in his account of these disputes is their almost paralysingly radical character. He remains content to suppose that in all discussions about 'meaning' we can 'pick out a word of a problematical kind' and consider only 'its own internal structure' (p. 20). This fails to recognize the implications of the fact that a term such as 'art' gains its meaning from the place it occupies

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within an entire conceptual scheme. To change the criteria for applying it will thus be to change a vast deal else besides. Traditionally, the concept of art has been connected with an ideal of workmanship, has been opposed to the 'merely useful', has been employed as an antonym for 'nature', and so on. If we now endorse the suggestion that an *objet trouvé* or a manufactured article can count as a work of art, we at once sever all these and many other conceptual links. So an argument over the application of the term 'art' is potentially nothing less than an argument over two rival (though not of course incommensurable)[5] ways of approaching and dividing up a large tract of our cultural experience. Williams appears in short to have overlooked the strongly holistic implications of the fact that, when a word changes its meaning, it also changes its relationship to an entire vocabulary.[6] What this tells us about such changes is that we must be prepared to focus not on the 'internal structure' of particular words, but rather on their role in upholding complete social philosophies.

IV

Even if we agree about the criteria for applying an appraisive term, I have suggested that a second type of dispute can arise over its use: a dispute about whether a given set of circumstances can be claimed to yield the criteria in virtue of which the term is normally employed. Again, such a disagreement will certainly be a substantive social one, not merely linguistic in character. For what is being contended in effect is that a refusal to apply the term in a certain situation may constitute an act of social insensitivity or a failure of social awareness.

As an illustration of this second type of argument, consider the claim—recently advanced with increasing frequency—that wives in ordinary middle-class families can properly be described as suffering exploitation, as being an exploited class. The social argument underlying this linguistic move might be characterized as follows: that it ought to be evident to all persons of goodwill that the circumstances of modern family life are such that this strongly condemnatory term does indeed (if you think about it) fit the facts of the case; and conversely, that if

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we fail to acknowledge that the application of the term 'exploitation'—in virtue of its agreed criteria—is indeed appropriate in the circumstances, then we are wilfully refusing to perceive the institution of the family in its true and baleful light.

Many of the arguments Williams cites appear to be of this general type. (See, for example, his discussions of 'discrimination', 'Imperialism' and 'paternalism'). But he crucially misdescribes what is at stake when he lumps these cases together with those in which 'new meanings' are 'offered' and are then 'qualified' or 'confirmed' (See p. 13 and cf. pp. 99, 109, 143, etc.). For it is of course essential to the success of the social argument underlying this form of linguistic debate that the appraisive word in question should be offered in virtue of its *accepted* meaning as an apt way of describing a situation which has not hitherto been described in such terms.

It is true that, as a consequence of such arguments, new meanings are often generated. But the process by which this happens is the opposite of the one Williams describes. When an argument of this nature is successful, the outcome will not be the emergence of a new meaning, save that the application of a term with a new range of reference may eventually put pressure on the criteria for applying it. The basic outcome will rather be the acceptance of new social perceptions, as a result of which the relevant appraisive terms will then be applied with unchanged meanings to new circumstances. It is only when such arguments fail that new meanings tend to arise.

This contention can readily be supported if we consider some of the ways in which a failure in this type of argument is capable of leaving its traces on the language. It may be that, when a social group seeks to insist that the ordinary criteria for applying a particular appraisive term are present in a wider range of circumstances than has commonly been allowed, the other users of the language—not sharing the underlying social perceptions of the first group—may simply assume in good faith that a 'new meaning' has indeed been 'offered', and may then accept it. The history of our culture (and in consequence our language) has been punctuated with many such misunderstandings.

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One fruitful source has been the continuing efforts of the proponents of commercial society to legitimate their undertakings by reference to the most highly approved moral and spiritual values. Consider, for example, the special use of the term 'religious' that first emerged in the later sixteenth century as a way of commending punctual, strict and conscientious forms of behaviour.[7] The aim was clearly to suggest that the ordinary criteria for applying the strongly commendatory term 'religious' could be found in such actions, and thus that the actions themselves should be seen essentially as acts of piety and not merely as instances of administrative competence. The failure of this move was quickly reflected in the emergence of a new meaning for the term 'religious' in the course of the seventeenth century—the meaning we still invoke when we say things like 'I attend the meetings of my Faculty religiously'. And it seems clear that the need for this new lexical entry originally arose out of the incapacity of most language-users to see that the ordinary criteria for 'religious' (including the notion of piety) were in fact present in all the circumstances in which the term was by then beginning to be used.

There are many recent instances of the same phenomenon, some of which are cited in *Keywords*. For example, many industrial firms like to claim—with reference to their own business strategies—that they have a certain *philosophy*; and firms regularly promise to send their *literature* (meaning only their advertising brochures) to prospective customers. Again a crude attempt is clearly being made to link the activities of commercial society with a range of 'higher' values. And again the failure of such efforts often gives rise to the emergence of genuine polysemy. Hearing that a firm has a certain philosophy, most language-users have assumed that a new meaning must be involved, and have gone on to use the term accordingly; they have not in general come to feel that corporations can indeed be said to have philosophies in the traditional sense of the term.

The language also supplies us with evidence of such ideological failures in a second and more decisive way. After a period of confusion about the criteria for applying a disputed term, the final outcome may not be polysemy, but rather a reversion to the employment of the original

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criteria, together with a corresponding obsolescence of the newer usages. This can be observed, for example, in the history of the word 'patriotic'. During the eighteenth century, the enemies of the ruling oligarchy in England sought to legitimate their attacks on the government by insisting that they were motivated entirely by their reverence for the constitution, and thus that their actions deserved to be commended as patriotic rather than condemned as factious. This at first bred such extreme uncertainty that the word 'patriot' eventually came to *mean* (according to one of Dr. Johnson's definitions) 'a factious disturber of the government'. With the gradual acceptance of party politics, however, this condemnatory usage gradually atrophied, and the word reverted to its original meaning and its standard application as a term of praise.[8]

Finally, the same form of argument can also have a more equivocal outcome, one which the language will again reveal. It may be that, after a similar period of semantic confusion, the original rather than the newer usage becomes obsolete. At first sight this may seem to indicate a success in the underlying campaign to change people's social perceptions. For this certainly makes it harder to invoke the primitive meaning of the word in order to insist that its newer applications may be nothing more than a deformation of its basic sense. But in fact such changes again tend to be indexes of ideological failure. For the standardization of a new set of criteria will inevitably carry with it an alteration of the term's appraisive force. Sometimes the power of the word to evaluate what it is used to describe may be retained in a different (and usually weaker) form, as in the well-known case of the word 'naughty'. But often the process of acquiring a new meaning goes with a total loss of appraisive force. A good example is provided by the history of the word 'commodity'. Before the advent of commercial society, to speak of something as a commodity was to praise it, and in particular to affirm that it answered to one's desires, and could thus be seen as beneficial, convenient, a source of advantage. Later an attempt was made to suggest that an article produced for sale ought to be seen as a source of benefit or advantage to its purchaser, and ought in consequence to be described and commended

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as a commodity. For a time the outcome of this further effort by the earliest English capitalists to legitimate their activities was that 'commodity' became a polysemic word. But eventually the original applications withered away, leaving us with nothing more than the current and purely descriptive meaning of 'commodity' as an object of trade. Although the capitalists inherited the earth, and with it much of the English language, they were unable in this case to persuade their fellow language-users to endorse their attempted eulogy of their own commercial practices.

V

Even if we agree about the criteria for applying an appraisive term, and also agree that a given set of circumstances can properly be said to answer to those criteria, I have suggested that still a third type of dispute can arise: a dispute about the direction of the term's evaluative force —a dispute, that is, about the nature and range of the speech-acts it can be used to perform. Once again this can certainly be characterized as a substantive social dispute and not merely a linguistic one. For in this case what is at issue is the possibility that a group of language-users may be open to the charge of having a mistaken or an undesirable social attitude.

We can distinguish two main routes by which an argument of this kind will be likely to issue in a contentious use of evaluative language. First of all, we may dissent from an orthodox social attitude by employing an appraisive term in such a way that its standard speech-act potential is weakened or even abolished. This can in turn be achieved in one of two ways. If we do not share the accepted evaluation of some particular action or state of affairs, we may indicate our dissent simply by dropping the corresponding term from our vocabulary altogether. There are many instances of this move in current social debate. Among terms which have hitherto been used to commend what they describe, this seems to be happening in the case of 'gentleman'. Among terms previously used to express an element of condescension or patronage, this already seems to have happened with 'native', at least when used as a noun.

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The other method of registering the same form of protest is more challenging. While continuing to employ an accepted term of social description and appraisal, we may make it contextually clear that we are using it merely to describe, and not at the same time to evaluate what is thereby described. Again, there are many contemporary instances of this move. Among terms previously used to evince condescension or even hatred, the classic example is provided by the word 'black' (used as the description of a person), whether employed as an adjective or a noun. Among terms previously used to commend, we may note the new and carefully neutral applications of such words as 'culture' and 'civilization'. As Williams himself observes (pp. 50, 80), these latter usages appear to have originated within the discipline of social anthropology, but have now come to be very generally accepted by those who wish to disavow any suggestion that one particular civilization may be more deserving of study than another.

The other main way in which we can use our evaluative language to signal our social attitudes is more dramatic in its implications. It is possible to indicate, simply through our use of appraisive terms, not that we dissent from the idea of evaluating what they describe, but rather that we disagree with the direction of the evaluation and wish to see it reversed.

Again there are obviously two possibilities here. We may use a term normally employed to condemn what it describes in such a way as to make it contextually clear that, in our view, the relevant action or state of affairs ought in fact to be commended. As Williams points out, one interesting example of this reversal can be seen in the history of the word 'myth'. In a more confidently rationalist age, to describe an explanation as mythological was to dismiss it. But in recent discussions the term has often been used to extol the mythological 'version of reality' as 'truer' and 'deeper' than more mundane accounts (pp. 176–8). Conversely, we may dislike a form of behaviour now regarded as praiseworthy, and indicate our disapproval by making it contextually clear that, although the term we are using is standardly employed to commend, we are employing it to condemn what is being described. Once

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again, there are many instances of this kind of struggle in current ideological debates. One only has to think of those politicians who are regularly praised by one group of commentators as 'liberal' while others employ the same term in order to denounce them.

Williams surveys a large number of disagreements that fall within this third general category, and in many cases his comments on them are extremely interesting and shrewd. But his discussion suffers throughout from a failure to distinguish this type of argument from the first type we considered, in which the primary point at issue was the proper sense or meaning of the terms involved. Indeed Williams not only fails but refuses to distinguish between these two types of argument. For example, he insists that the change involved in the move from condemning myths to commending them must be construed as a change in the 'sense' of the word 'myth' (p. 177).

It would be perfectly possible, however, for both the sense and the reference of 'myth' to remain completely stable in the face of the sort of changes in the use of the word that Williams is concerned to point out. It may be that all (and only) those theories and explanations which used to be called mythological are still called mythological, and that the *only* change involved in the use of the term derives from the shift from condemning myths to commending them. It is true that such a variation of speech-act potential will be very likely in due course to affect the sense (and in consequence the reference) of the word. But it is a mistake to suppose that this type of argument is primarily (or even necessarily) concerned with sense. What is changing—at least initially—is nothing to do with sense; what is changing is simply a social or intellectual attitude on the part of those who use the language.[9]

VI

I have now tried to furnish at least a preliminary response to the very large question I raised at the outset. I asked what kinds of knowledge and awareness we can hope to acquire about our social world through studying the vocabulary we use to describe and appraise it. I have answered that there are three main types of insight we can

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hope to gain: insights into changing social beliefs and theories; into changing social perceptions and awareness; and into changing social values and attitudes. I have thus attempted to supply at least a sketch of what seems to me most seriously lacking in Williams's book: an account of the sort of methodology we need to develop in order to use the evidence of our social vocabulary as a clue to the improved understanding of our social world.[10]

This in turn suggests a further and even more vertiginous question: are we now in a position to say anything about the nature of the role played by our appraisive vocabulary in the process (and hence in the explanation) of social change?

Williams clearly thinks that we are, and conveys this sense by alluding repeatedly to the image of language as a mirror of social reality. The process of social change is treated as the primary cause of developments in our vocabulary; conversely, such developments are treated as reflections of the process of social change. Describing the emergence of capitalism as 'a distinct economic system', for example, Williams remarks that this gave rise to 'interesting consequent uses of language' (p. 43). And in commenting more specifically on 'the economic changes of the Industrial Revolution', he notes that these produced a 'greatly sharpened' and extended 'vocabulary of class' (p. 53).

There is no doubt that this image serves to remind us of an important point. Where we encounter a wide measure of agreement about the application of key social terms, we must be dealing with a strikingly homogeneous social and moral world; where there is no such agreement, we can expect chaos. But it is arguable that the metaphor is also misleading in one crucial respect. It encourages us to assume that we are dealing with two distinct and contingently related domains: that of the social world itself, and that of the language we then apply in an attempt to delineate its character. This certainly seems to be the assumption underlying Williams's account. He sees a complete disjunction between 'the words' he discusses and 'the real issues' in the social world. And he sometimes speaks as if the gap between the two is one we can barely hope to bridge. 'However complete the analysis' we offer at the

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linguistic level, he maintains, we cannot expect that 'the real issues' will be fundamentaly affected (pp. 13–14).

To speak in this way is to forget something that Williams emphasizes at other points in *Keywords* with striking force: the fact that one of the most important uses of evaluative language is that of legitimating as well as describing the activities and attitudes of dominant social groups. The significance of this consideration can be brought out if we revert for a moment to an example already cited—the entrepreneurs of Elizabethan England who were anxious to persuade their contemporaries that, although their commercial enterprises might appear to be morally doubtful, they were in fact deserving of respect. One device they adopted was to argue, as we have seen, that their characteristically punctual and conscientious behaviour could properly be seen as religious in character, and hence as motivated by pious and not merely self-seeking principles. Their underlying purpose was of course to legitimate their apparently untoward behaviour by insisting on the propriety of describing it in these highly commendatory terms.

Now it may seem—and this is evidently Williams's view—that this sort of example precisely fits the metaphor of language as a mirror of a more basic reality. The merchant is perceived to be engaged in a more or less dubious way of life which he has a strong motive for wishing to exhibit as legitimate. So he professes just those principles, and offers just those descriptions, that serve to present what he is doing in a morally acceptable light. And since the selection of the principles and their accompanying descriptions both relate to his behaviour in an obviously *ex post facto* way, it hardly seems that an explanation of his behaviour need depend in the least on studying the moral language he may elect to use. For his choice of vocabulary appears to be entirely determined by his prior social needs.

As I have tried to hint, however, this is to misunderstand the role of the normative vocabulary which any society employs for the description and appraisal of its social life. The merchant cannot hope to describe *any* action he may choose to perform as being 'religious' in character, but only those which can be claimed with some show of plausibility to meet such agreed criteria as there may be for the appli-

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cation of the term. It follows that if he is anxious to have his conduct appraised as that of a genuinely religious man, he will find himself restricted to the performance of only a certain range of actions. Thus the problem facing the merchant who wishes to be seen as pious rather than self-interested cannot simply be the instrumental one of tailoring his account of his principles in order to fit his projects; it must in part be the problem of tailoring his projects in order to make them answer to the pre-existing language of moral principles.[11]

The story of the merchant suggests two morals. One is that it must be a mistake to portray the relationship between our social vocabulary and our social world as a purely external and contingent one. It is true that our social practices help to bestow meaning on our social vocabulary. But it is equally true that our social vocabulary helps to constitute the character of those practices. To see the role of our evaluative language in helping to legitimate social action is to see the point at which our social vocabulary and our social fabric mutually prop each other up. As Charles Taylor has remarked, 'we can speak of mutual dependence if we like, but what this really points up is the artificiality of the distinction between social reality and the language of description of that social reality.'[12]

The other moral is that, if there are indeed causal linkages between social language and social reality, to speak of the one as mirroring the other may be to envisage the causal arrows pointing in the wrong direction. As the example of the Elizabethan merchant suggests, to recover the nature of the normative vocabulary available to an agent for the description and appraisal of his conduct is at the same time to indicate one of the constraints on his conduct itself. This in turn suggests that, if we wish to explain why our merchant chose to concentrate on certain courses of action while avoiding others, we are bound to make some reference to the prevailing moral language of the society in which he was acting. For this, it now appears, must have figured not as an epiphenomenon of his projects, but as one of the determinants of his actions.

To conclude with these morals is to issue a warning to literary critics and social historians alike to avoid a preva-

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lent but impoverishing form of reductionism. But it is also to suggest that the special techniques of the literary critic have—or ought to have—a central place in the process of cultural criticism which a book like Williams's *Keywords* has scarcely begun to recognize.

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NOTES

[1]All page-references in the text are to the Fontana (paperback) edition of Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London, 1976).

[2]Amongst moral philosophers I am most indebted to Philippa Foot, 'Moral Arguments', *Mind* 67 (1958), pp. 502–513. Amongst theorists of language, my approach owes most to the writings of J. L. Austin and the later Wittgenstein, and to the analysis of Frege's views presented in Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (London, 1973), esp. pp. 81–109.

[3]For an attack on this line of thought, see Hilary Putnam, 'How not to talk about meaning' in *Mind, Language and Reality* (Philosophical Papers, Volume 2) (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 117–131.

[4]Even Putnam's examples are unconvincing. In the article cited in footnote 3, he takes the case of 'gold' (pp. 127–8), and argues that the meaning of the word would not be affected even if we found gold rusting, and were thus obliged to change our beliefs about the substance. This seems dogmatic. Would we really go on saying things like 'as good as gold'? And if not, would we not have to concede that the meaning of 'gold' had changed?

[5]Otherwise it is hard to see how the disputants could be *arguing*.

[6]Cf. Michael Dummett, 'The Justification of Deduction', *The Proceedings of the British Academy* 59 (1973), pp. 201–232.

[7]Here I offer a different—a corrected—account of an example I originally mentioned in my article 'Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action', *Political Theory* 2 (1974), pp. 277–303, at pp. 298–9.

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[8]For a full analysis of this example, see my article 'The Principles and Practice of Opposition: The Case of Bolingbroke versus Walpole', in *Historical Perspectives*, ed. Neil McKendrick (London, 1974), pp. 93–128.

[9]In this paragraph I draw on John R. Searle, 'Meaning and Speech Acts', *The Philosophical Review* 71 (1962), pp. 423–432. However, Searle does not I think succeed in showing that meaning and speech acts are wholly separate. All he shows is that sense and reference are capable of remaining stable while speech-act potential is undergoing a change. But we might still want to insist that speech-act potential is a part of meaning, even if it is separate from both sense and reference.

[10]I have also (though incidentally) tried to supply what I take to be the sort of typology one would need to construct in order to investigate the class of so-called 'essentially contested' concepts in a satisfactory way. In the growing literature on this topic the discussion has tended to centre on the analysis of the concepts in themselves. This seems insensitive to the fact that concepts are the possessions of particular groups. In order to understand a dispute about a contested concept we need to understand why certain groups may wish to employ it in certain ways while others do not. Strictly speaking, there is no analysis to be given of contests about concepts in themselves, but only of their uses in argument.

[11]In this and the previous paragraph I am drawing heavily on the Preface to my book *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 Vols. (Cambridge, 1978).

[12]Charles Taylor, 'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man', *The Review of Metaphysics* 24 (1971), pp. 3–51, at p. 24.

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Lamb and Restoration Comedy

ROY PARK

LAMB'S ESSAY on Restoration Comedy, or to give it its full title, 'On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century', is perhaps the most widely read and generally known of all his critical writings. All too often it is, with the essay on Shakespeare, the only piece of criticism that is known. It has been the starting point for innumerable articles on Restoration Comedy in which unfamiliarity with the rest of Lamb's criticism has led to the widespread assumption that it is characteristic of his work as a whole. The essays on Restoration Comedy and Shakespeare are taken to indicate an armchair aesthete unwilling to allow the intrusion of flesh and blood into his reading of literature. In the former, he is said to view art, literature, or more specifically comedy as a fantasy world that has no connection with life; in the other, that the tragedies of Shakespeare cannot be represented effectively on the stage. These views have seriously damaged Lamb's reputation, yet even the most cursory reading of his essays, letters and miscellaneous prose reveals their inadequacy. Far from disliking the theatre, Lamb with his sister Mary was a constant theatre-goer, and the stage exercised an influence on his criticism no less important than the influence of painting on that of Hazlitt. It also played a more important part in his life generally. He was a personal friend of many of the greatest actors of his time; he proposed to the actress, Fanny Kelly; his many sketches of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century actors are unsurpassed. He wrote four plays, as well as a number of prologues and epilogues to the plays of others. Two-thirds of his criticism is devoted to the drama, and his account of the relationship between actor and audience in 'Stage Illusion' is the best in the language.

Biographical evidence apart, Lamb's general view of life and literature might be roughly summarized as follows. Man, for Lamb, is a flawed creature 'full of imperfections, at best . . . a weak and ignorant being' who must recognize himself as such before there is any hope of redemption.[1] In his earliest letters, 1796–98, this preoccupation is expressed in theological terms reminiscent of the eight-

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eenth-century humanist tradition of Pope and Johnson, and although after 1800 the specifically Christian element disappeared, his conception of the nature of man remained constant. The publication of the *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* in 1808 shows that he had progressed to a view of human experience where the two powerful antagonist forces are no longer reason and passion, but imagination and reason, with reason as the faculty coordinating the observations of the senses. Imagination becomes a faculty operative in our daily experience as well as the impulse creative of art. The imaginative or poetic is set off against the abstract, the real, the empirical, mundane and familiar. In selecting his specimens from the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, Lamb in the preface emphasizes his preoccupation with 'the moral sense of our ancestors' expressed not in abstractions but in terms of action, character and feeling:

> The plays which I have made choice of have been, with few exceptions, those which treat of human life and manners, rather than masques, and Arcadian pastorals, with their train of abstractions. . . . My leading design has been, to illustrate what may be called the moral sense of our ancestors. To show in what manner they felt, when they placed themselves by the power of imagination in trying situations, in the conflicts of duty and passion, or the strife of contending duties; what sort of loves and enmities theirs were; how their griefs were tempered, and their full-swoln joys abated. . . .[2]

Even if this passage were an isolated instance, still the very terms—'moral sense', 'conflicts of duty and passion', 'strife of contending duties', 'human life and manners'—are a challenge to those who would interpret the later essay on Restoration Comedy as an exercise in the dissociation of literature from life and morality.

The passage from the preface expresses a principle which Lamb reiterates throughout his critical writings and one which he finds in all great literature. This 'dramatic' principle, or principle of 'dramatic morality'[3] determines his response to such diverse figures as Shakespeare and the Elizabethan dramatists, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Leon-

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ardo and Hogarth, Addison and Hazlitt, Gibbon and Burnet. His imaginative openness, or what he ironically terms his 'imperfect intellect', refuses to accept traditional explanations of the nature of human experience. Of religious proverbs and aphorisms designed to diminish the fact of death in life, he writes: 'Those metaphors solace me not, nor sweeten the unpalatable draught of mortality.'[4] He neither wishes to see them incorporated in works of literature, nor does he wish to see literature made subject to them. He always stresses the uncertainty, mystery and wonder of living, and this is why in the *Specimens* we find him as early as 1808 rejecting 'The insipid levelling morality to which the modern stage is tied down'.[5] Even earlier, in criticizing the poetry of Southey for its overt moralizing, he demanded the same dramatic principle:

> A Moral should be wrought into the body and soul, the matter and tendency, of a Poem, not taggd to the end, like "A God send the good ship into harbour" at the conclusion of our bills of Lading. . . . Any dissenting minister may say & do as much—[6]

Two years later, Wordsworth's 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' met with similar treatment:

> I will just add that it appears to me a fault in the Beggar, that the instructions conveyed in it are too direct and like a lecture: they dont slide into the mind of the reader, while he is imagining no such matter.—An intelligent reader finds a sort of insult in being told, I will teach you how to think upon this subject.[7]

Far from dissociating literature and morality, he insists on their connection. In the same letter, for example, he criticizes Wordsworth for designating the *Lyrical Ballads* as 'Experiments on the public taste', rather than 'having sprung (as they must have done) from living and daily circumstances'. The morality of a work for Lamb, as for Henry James, is the result of the amount of felt life involved in the production of the work. Literature must be tested against our own experience as moral, and therefore complex and diverse human beings. But although there is a connection between literature and life, it is not direct. Art is not life, however closely they are related and how-

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ever dependent the one is upon the other. Neither literature nor painting must be made subject to the criteria of the 'poor unassisted senses' of rational man.[8] Events, characters, feelings in a play, novel or poem are not the result of an accumulation of observed realistic detail from the familiar world of the everyday; they are not 'real', 'natural', 'probable', 'like life'. Art is imitation, not copy. In a letter of 1801 Lamb praised Shakespeare in Aristotelian terms because he could 'make [the] *impossible* appear *probable*',[9] and in 1827 he was still insisting on the importance of aesthetic form:

> These old play-wrights invested their bad characters with notions of good, which could by no possibility have coexisted with their actions. Without a soul of goodness in himself, how could Shakspeare's Richard the Third have lit upon those sweet phrases and inducements by which he attempts to win over the dowager queen to let him wed her daughter? It is not Nature's nature, but Imagination's substituted nature, which does almost as well in a fiction.[10]

Lamb's insistence on a dramatic morality and on the need to recognize the importance of imaginative artifice reinforces his sense of the ultimate aim of art and its significance for 'a guilty mankind'.[11] Together they enable him to assess the achievements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and at the same time to destroy the artistic and critical orthodoxy of the late eighteenth century with its weakly liberal humanitarian emphasis. James Barry, for example, preferred the sentimental, domestic paintings of Penny and Bunbury to the moral satires of Hogarth. Lamb's response is entirely characteristic:

> The relieving of poverty by the purse, and the restoring a young men to his parents by using the methods prescribed by the Humane Society, are doubtless very amiable subjects, pretty things to teach the first rudiments of humanity; they amount to about as much instruction as the stories of good boys that give away their custards to poor beggar-boys in children's books. But, good God! is this *milk for babes* to be set up in

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opposition to Hogarth's moral scenes, his *strong meat for men*?[12]

At crucial points in the essays on Hogarth and Shakespeare, Lamb invokes the aid of Milton to enforce his view of man as a piece of 'ruined mortality'.[13] Opposing the millenerian and sentimental optimism of the age, he writes scornfully: 'let us proclaim at once an age of gold, and sink the existence of vice and misery in our speculations ... let us *make believe* with the children that every body is good and happy. . . .'[14] The fish cannot philosophize the ice away in winter for Lamb any more than for Keats. He does not believe in this kind of perfectibility. Yet the critic who is here so scornfully dismissive of an art of 'make believe' is the same critic who, according to now current interpretations, defends Restoration Comedy as a literature of make-believe. Certainly, part of the attraction of Restoration Comedy for Lamb was that, unlike the domestic drama of the eighteenth century, it was ill adapted to accommodate the complacent self-reference which he observed as characteristic of the modern theatre audience with their desire 'to be complimented on their goodness'.[15]

For Lamb, as for Shelley, 'we live on, and in living we lose the apprehension of life'.[16] Like so many of his great contemporaries he saw the fall in terms of the inevitable transition from a poetic or imaginative apprehension of life to a rational and abstract awareness. He emphasized the formal or artificial aspect of art because the aesthetic form for him guaranteed the imaginative status of the artist's vision, differentiating it from the '*tædium quotidianarum formarum*'.[17] But the process of acclimatization to the habitual and familiar, although endemic, is not irreversible, and as the last paragraph of 'The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple' indicates, the imaginative spirit can never be altogether eliminated. In this context, the ultimate aim of art, and its significance for a fallen mankind, is one of redemption. If therefore (i) a poet or painter does not succeed in achieving this end, or (ii) a critic misinterprets a work which does, or (iii) an actor or audience confuses a play that does with one that does not, then Lamb is inexorable. The failure to utilize the transforming power

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of the imagination, or the misconception of its function is merely to perpetuate our inevitable bondage to the abstract and familiar. His strictures on the paintings of John Martin in 'Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art' and his review of the Reynolds exhibition in 1813 belong to the first of these three categories; the essay on Hogarth and 'The Sanity of True Genius' to the second, and his essay on Shakespeare and review of Cooke's Richard III to the third. In all of these essays Lamb's strategy is similar. In each, a writer or painter is chosen as representative of the 'imaginative' or 'poetic' and of the 'real' or 'natural'. John Martin, typifying the latter is opposed to Titian, Raphael and Poussin; Reynolds to Leonardo; Penny and Bunbury to Hogarth; the fashionable novel of the late eighteenth century to Spenser; *George Barnwell* to *Othello*; Cooke's performance of Richard III to Lamb's interpretation of that role. In every case he provides us with an imaginative norm against which to measure failure or partial failure. In almost all his critical essays, Lamb is combatting the loss of imaginative potential involved in inadequate criticism, acting, literature and painting. It is this sense of needless loss, loss which is neither fortunate nor inevitable, but self-inflicted and gratuitous, which is the motivating force behind all these essays.

In 'rescuing' us 'from the polluting spirit of the world',[18] literature does not ignore the ordinary and everyday, the 'real'. The danger of the eighteenth-century theory of art as ideal as exemplified by Barry's criticism of Hogarth is that it produces a 'disgust at common life' and 'the countenances of the world about us'.[19] However 'unpalatable' the 'draught of mortality' might be, the artist cannot live without the world of experience. Without the world we cannot live, yet to live only in the world is to cease to be human in the fullest sense of the word. The paradise regained by the imagination is transient, fleeting, elusive, impalpable, mysterious and insusceptible of rational explanations. The effects of the imagination 'cannot be lasting: it is enough for the purpose of the poet, if they are felt'.[20] The end of art is not an ideal, non-natural order superimposed on the everyday and phenomenal, but the abstract and familiar apprehended imaginatively. Art, like know-

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ledge for Kant, begins with experience, but it does not follow that it all arises out of experience. Lamb's awareness of the nature of art as a formal apprehension of what cannot be stated rationally, and its inextricable relationship to life is the key to his critical endeavour.

It is clear, therefore, that there exists a serious discrepancy between Lamb's invariable emphasis on the moral and regenerative nature of literature and the theory of literature attributed to him on the basis of his essay on Restoration Comedy by, for instance, Macaulay's criticism in the *Edinburgh Review* for 1841. Reviewing Leigh Hunt's *The Dramatic Works of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar* (1840) Macaulay took issue first with Hunt:

> But we can by no means agree with Mr. Leigh Hunt, who seems to hold that there is little or no ground for the charge of immorality so often brought against the literature of the Restoration. . . . Mr. Leigh Hunt treats the whole matter a little too much in the easy style of Lucio; and perhaps his exceeding lenity disposes us to be somewhat too severe.
>
> And yet it is not easy to be too severe. For in truth this part of our literature is a disgrace to our language and our national character. It is clever, indeed, and very entertaining; but it is, in the most emphatic sense of the words, 'earthly, sensual, devilish.'[21]

Macaulay then turns to Lamb, and after summarizing the argument of the essay on Restoration Comedy concludes that in spite of his love and reverence for Lamb—'we cherish his memory as much as if we had known him personally'—'his argument, though ingenious, is altogether sophistical'.[22] His summary of that argument is fair:

> The dramatists of the latter part of the seventeenth century are not, according to him, to be tried by the standard of morality which exists, and ought to exist, in real life. Their world is a conventional world. Their heroes and heroines belong, not to England, not to Christendom, but to an Utopia of gallantry, to a Fairyland, where the Bible and Burn's Justice are unknown. . . . A real Horner, a real Careless, would, it is admitted,

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be exceedingly bad men. But to predicate morality or immorality of the Horner of Wycherley and the Careless of Congreve is as absurd as it would be to arraign a sleeper for his dreams.[23]

Comedy, according to Macaulay, is an imitation of real life, and must have some reference to the great rule which directs life. We may, as Macaulay does, take the essay at its face value. But if we do so, our interpretation runs counter to the critical criteria of a lifetime, and compromises Lamb's own standing as a critic. On the other hand, we could say that this is an essay of Elia (unlike those on Hogarth and Shakespeare), an invention or *jeu d'esprit*, palmed off by the author on his 'phantom' proxy[25] behind whom he can retire and disclaim all responsibility. Such a view, however, only raises more problems than it solves. How, for example, are we to intepret other 'critical' essays in the same series that are perfectly consistent with the rest of his non-Elian criticism? The origin of many of these essays in either category is similar: a reaction by Lamb to a contemporary or near contemporary misconception of the nature of imaginative literature and its relation to life. This is the case whether he is considering Hazlitt on Sidney, John Martin and the Old Masters, or insanity and creative genius. In any case, a number of themes present in the Restoration Comedy essay are to be found elsewhere in his criticism and are entirely characteristic of his work as a whole. Even in the non-critical essays of Elia, the distinction made between the genuine Lamb and the spurious Elia is too often purely arbitrary.

There is, however, another way of looking at the essays. It was originally the second part of a three-part article entitled 'The Old Actors'. When revised for publication in book form in 1823, the essays were altered and rearranged, the title, 'On Some of the Old Actors', being given to the first of the three articles. Nevertheless, the essay on Restoration Comedy is still integrally related to the preceding essay and is an exemplification of what is involved in the acting of different kinds of comedy. It is not at all a literary analysis of Restoration Comedy, but considers how it should appear to the audience when acted

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on the stage. This critical perspective differentiates the essay from that on Shakespeare, in which Lamb was concerned with the reading of the plays as literature. His concern in the 1822 piece is for actors and acting and audience response. But the basic theme, poetry and abstraction, imagination and realism, imitation and copy, although very differently handled in the two essays, is the same. Lamb is still concerned with literature and imagination on the one hand, life and abstraction on the other: Imagination's substituted nature as opposed to Nature's nature, and the application of the criteria of the latter to the former.

Lamb often expressed the view that there is a radical difference between the roles of the actor in comedy and in tragedy. In tragedy, he argues, there is a total identification between actor and character; in comedy, such identification would be detrimental to the effect of the play. This theory eventually found its fullest expression in the essay, 'Stage Illusion', published in 1825:

> In tragedy—in all which is to affect the feelings—this undivided attention to his stage business, seems indispensable. . . . But, tragedy apart, it may be inquired whether, in certain characters in comedy, especially those which are a little extravagant, or which involve some notion repugnant to the moral sense, it is not a proof of the highest skill in the comedian when, without absolutely appealing to an audience, he keeps up a tacit understanding with them; and makes them, unconsciously to themselves, a party in the scene. . . .
>
> The most mortifying infirmity in human nature . . . is, perhaps, cowardice. To see a coward *done to the life* upon a stage would produce anything but mirth. Yet we most us of remember Jack Bannister's cowards. Could any thing be more agreeable, more pleasant? We loved the rogues. How was this effected but by the exquisite art of the actor in a perpetual sub-insinuation to us, the spectators, even in the extremity of the shaking fit, that he was not half such a coward as we took him for? . . . Was this a genuine picture of a coward? or not rather a likeness, which the clever artist contrived to palm upon us instead of an original; while we secretly con-

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> nived at the delusion for the purpose of greater pleasure, than a more genuine counterfeiting of the imbecility, helplessness, and utter self-desertion, which we know to be concomitants of cowardice in real life, could have given us?[26]

Lamb then proceeds to analyse the representation of the miser on the stage, citing the 'skilful actor [who], by a sort of sub-reference, rather than direct appeal to us, disarms the character of a great deal of its odiousness'. Here the actor resembles the dramatist himself who can invest his 'bad characters with notions of good, which could by no possibility have coexisted with their actions'. Properly acted, the miser becomes 'sympathetic; *i.e.* is no genuine miser. Here again a diverting likeness is substituted for a very disagreeable reality'. He illustrates the difference between the acting of comedy and the acting of tragedy by a comparison:

> The degrees of credibility demanded to the two things may be illustrated by the different sort of truth which we expect when a man tells us a mournful or a merry story. If we suspect the former of falsehood in any one tittle, we reject it altogether. Our tears refuse to flow at a suspected imposition. But the teller of a mirthful tale has latitude allowed him. We are content with less than absolute truth. 'Tis the same with dramatic illusion.[27]

In short, the comic actor like the dramatist himself 'must a little desert nature' by a 'sort of compromise'. He must on no account be 'too natural'. The essay abounds in references to 'life', 'real life', 'done to the life', 'nature' and 'natural' because these are the criteria which are as inapplicable to comic acting as they are, in his other essays, to literature generally.

It may seem surprising that, with such a view of the acting of comic roles involving 'some notion repugnant to the moral sense', Lamb should not have introduced the same idea into his essay on Restoration Comedy. Nevertheless, it is the underlying premiss, neglect of which can only lead to a misunderstanding of his position. The reason for the omission, if indeed it be such, is that he has already

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dealt with the point in relation to artificial comedy in the first of the three essays, 'On Some of the Old Actors'. At the end of this, the first of the three linked essays, he had written of the performance of Jack Palmer:

> Jack had two voices,—both plausible, hypocritical, and insinuating; but his secondary or supplemental voice still more decisively histrionic than his common one. It was reserved for the spectator. . . . This secret correspondence with the company before the curtain (which is the bane and death of tragedy) has an extremely happy effect in some kinds of comedy, in the more highly artificial comedy of Congreve or of Sheridan especially, where the absolute sense of reality . . . is not required, or would rather interfere to diminish your pleasure. The fact is, you do not believe in such characters as Surface—the villain of artificial comedy. . . . If you did, they would shock and not divert you.[28]

Lamb illustrates this distinction by citing a passage from Congreve's *Love for Love* in which Ben, having just returned from sea, asks after his brother, Dick. When his father reminds him that his brother has been dead for two years, and that he had earlier been informed of this by letter, Ben replies: 'Mess, that's true; Marry, I had forgot. Dick's dead, as you say—Well, and how?—I have a many questions to ask you.' Lamb's comment on this passage at the end of the first essay leads directly into the discussion of Restoration Comedy in the second:

> Here is an instance of insensibility which in real life would be revolting, or rather in real life could not have co-existed with the warm-hearted temperament of the character. But when you read it in the spirit with which such playful selections and specious combinations rather than strict *metaphrases* of nature should be taken, or when you saw Bannister play it, it neither did, nor does wound the moral sense at all. . . . We never think the worse of Ben for it, or feel it as a stain upon his character.[29]

When artificial comedy, and the term 'artificial' in the title of the second essay is of the greatest importance, is acted naturally, without 'sub-reference', 'sub-insinuation', 'tacit

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understanding', 'bye-intimations', or 'secret correspondence', the consequence is a jarring discord similar in kind to the effect of acting *King Lear*:

> But when an actor comes, and instead of the delightful phantom—the creature dear to half-belief—which Bannister exhibited—displays before our eyes a downright concretion of a Wapping sailor—a jolly warm-hearted Jack Tar—and nothing else—when instead of investing it with a delicious confusedness of the head, and a veering undirected goodness of purpose—he gives to it a downright daylight understanding, and a full consciousness of its actions; thrusting forward the sensibilities of the character with a pretence as if it stood upon nothing else, and was to be judged by them alone—we feel the discord of the thing; the scene is disturbed; a real man has got in among the dramatis personæ, and puts them out.[30]

Lamb's argument at this point is analogous to his argument in the essay on Shakespeare. Like the great poet, the actor in artificial comedy 'must a little desert nature'; the 'wise falsification' or 'beautiful compromise' of the one is transformed into the 'specious combination' of the other. The concern of both is with 'Imagination's substituted nature'. To confuse the merits of the 'natural' *George Barnwell* with those of the 'imaginative' *Othello* is a mistake similar to the confusion between an 'artificial' character and his 'realistic' presentation on the stage. But although the argument in both essays is analogous, it is not the same. An important element is missing in the drama of the Restoration period which is present in the plays of Shakespeare.

The opening sentence of the essay on Restoration Comedy—'The artificial Comedy . . . is quite extinct on our stage'—refers not to the genre, but to a particular style of acting it, and the appropriate response of the audience to such acting. Lamb is not maintaining that Restoration Comedy is moral, immoral, or even amoral, but that in a well-acted comedy of this kind, the stage illusion is imperfect, so subtly broken down, that we perceive the actors as actors, the play as a play. In these conditions, the characters of artificial comedy do not 'wound the moral sense at

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all'. To an audience accustomed to such stylized performances, the characters do not appear immoral. In the second part of this essay Lamb considers the acting of Sheridan's plays. Here again he argues that artificial comedy positively requires stage presentation to bring it to life, but stage presentation of a particular kind. The reading of these plays is obviously of much less interest to him, but even in this case, the reading must be 'in the spirit'.

Comparison with Hazlitt's response to Restoration Comedy in *Lectures on the English Comic Writers* (1819) is illuminating. Writing of Millamant, for example, he says:

> Millamant is nothing but a fine lady; and all her airs and affectation would be blown away with the first breath of misfortune. Enviable in drawing-rooms, adorable at her toilette, fashion, like a witch, has thrown its spell around her; but if that spell were broken, her power of fascination would be gone. For that reason I think the character better adapted for the stage: it is more artificial, more theatrical, more meretricious. I would rather have seen Mrs. Abington's Millamant, than any Rosalind that ever appeared on the stage. Some how, this sort of acquired elegance is more a thing of costume, of air and manner; and in comedy, or on the comic stage, the light and familiar, the trifling, superficial, and agreeable, bears, perhaps, rightful sway over that which touches the affections, or exhausts the fancy.[31]

Hazlitt, however, is more circumspect than Lamb. Hazlitt does not say that the world of Restoration Comedy *is* an insulated Utopia unconnected with ordinary morality. Instead, we are '*almost* transported to another world, and escape from this dull age'; the gay scene is presented '*as* on the canvass of Watteau'; Congreve's *Way of the World* 'is an essence *almost* too fine'. The characters act '*as if* they moved in air, and drank a finer spirit of humanity'. Fashion is '*like* a witch, [which] has thrown its spell around her'; we are '*like* spectators at court . . . the gala day of wit and pleasure'. Hazlitt, moreover, lays a more explicit emphasis on the response of the spectators. Congreve's comedies, he writes, 'are already become a dead letter' to the stage, with the exception of *Love for Love* which 'still

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acts, and is still acted well. The effect of it is prodigious on the well-informed spectator'. The fault of the same dramatist's *Double Dealer*, significantly, is that 'the turbulent impetuosity' of Lady Touchwood's character is discordant with the comic texture of the rest of the play, and is 'too near to the tragedy-queen'. In Lamb's terms, Wycherley has intruded a 'real' person among the *dramatis personae*. Like Lamb, Hazlitt clearly saw the gulf separating artificial comedy from the world of everyday life: 'the head grows giddy in turning from the highest point of rapture to the ordinary business of life; and we can with difficulty recal the truant Fancy to those objects which we are fain to take up with here, *for better, for worse*.'

The greatest difference between Hazlitt and Lamb is not in their responses, but the manner in which Lamb suppresses his general critical criteria, and Hazlitt, albeit reluctantly, draws attention to them. In his lectures we are conscious of Restoration Comedy being viewed against the background of the rest of English drama; inevitably, there are cross references, comparisons and contrasts. Such lectures are necessarily comprehensive. Like Lamb, Hazlitt sees that with one or two exceptions, the comedies themselves 'are already become a dead letter' as far as the contemporary theatre is concerned, and that their presentation requires a 'well-informed' audience. Hazlitt's concern is with the comedies as literature, and he presents his view of them critically and prosaically with all the necessary qualifications of a 'perhaps', 'almost', and an 'as if'. Lamb, on the other hand, is not a professional critic writing a formal critique, but an essayist recalling famous actors and memorable performances of more than twenty years before in a volume of personal essays that neither has, nor should have, any pretensions to critical comprehensiveness. His essay, in its suppression of a critical or historical context, is the formal equivalent of the comedy he is criticizing. This is perhaps why, much more than Hazlitt, he is prepared to resort to metaphor to convey his own strongly felt responses.

Just as important, however, is Lamb's sense of a specific occasion. In the *Specimens*, almost fifteen years before, he had drawn attention to the 'insipid levelling morality' of

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the modern stage which 'would not admit of such admirable passions as these scenes are filled with. A puritanical obtuseness of sentiment, a stupid infantile goodness, is creeping among us'. While Hazlitt might quote this passage on a number of occasions with approval, such was not the reaction of some of the reviewers of the volume who criticized Lamb for girding at established contemporary taste. We are too apt to forget that Thomas Bowdler's expurgated edition of Shakespeare was published, not in the Victorian period, but in 1818. The contemporary reception of Restoration Comedy led Lamb into a consideration of the major critical preoccupation at the centre of his greatest essays, the relationship between art and life, of poetry and abstraction:

> The business of their dramatic characters will not stand the moral test. We screw every thing up to that. Idle gallantry in a fiction, a dream, the passing pageant of an evening, startles us in the same way as the alarming indications of profligacy in a son or ward in real life. . . . We have no such middle emotions as dramatic interests left. . . . We are spectators to a plot or intrigue (not reducible in life to the point of strict morality) and take it all for truth. We substitute a real for a dramatic person. . . . We have been spoiled with . . . the exclusive and all devouring drama of common life; where the moral point is every thing.[32]

The theme is one which can be traced back to a much earlier period in Lamb's development as a critic. In a letter to Manning, 5 December 1806, he gave an account of the failure of one of Holcroft's plays: 'In addition to this, a whore was another principal character, a most unfortunate choice in this moral day. The audience were as scandalized as if you were to introduce such a personage to their private tea tables.'[33] The fate of Restoration Comedy in the early nineteenth century typified for Lamb the fate of the imaginative arts in general. Unfortunately, unlike the comedies of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, the tragedies of Shakespeare, the poetry of Spenser, the prints of Hogarth, and the paintings of the Renaissance which perform a similar function in other essays, Restoration

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Comedy is unable to sustain its role without the cutting of critical corners. It does not allow Lamb to bring external critical criteria evident throughout the rest of his work into play. He cannot invoke his principle of 'dramatic morality'; nor can he insinuate the redemptive power of this particular kind of drama. This is why, although many of the themes are characteristic of his critical writings as a whole, the essay itself remains insulated from the rest. The nature of the occasion precludes external reference to other periods and works such as are to be found in Hazlitt's lecture. Lamb cannot argue as he had done in the case of Spenser that when a poet seems most to recede from humanity, he will be found closest to it; he cannot invoke his dramatic principle which necessarily entails reference to the variety and complexity of moral experience; he cannot relate it specifically to the age which produced it as he had done in the *Specimens*. Hazlitt was free to make the link with the age which produced it: 'Happy, thoughtless age, when kings and nobles led purely ornamental lives; when the utmost stretch of a morning's study went no farther than the choice of a sword-knot, or the adjustment of a side-curl; when the soul spoke out in all the pleasing eloquence of dress; and beaux and belles, enamoured of themselves in one another's follies, fluttered like gilded butterflies, in giddy mazes, through the walks of St. James's Park!'[34]

The principal problem facing Lamb is the inadequacy of the vehicle, Restoration Comedy, for the tenor of his argument. But the argument itself, the nature of the relationship between art and life, is so important to him, that he dare not explicitly acknowledge the weakness of his instrument. He can dissociate the imaginative form of the comedy from abstraction, from the real and mundane, but he cannot finally assert its profound imaginative quality. He attempted to ward off the sledgehammer of contemporary moralism without acknowledging the imaginative weakness of this form of comedy. The price he has since paid has been great. Yet he does leave hints of how he would have judged the comedies. Whereas Hazlitt characterizes them as 'light and familiar . . . trifling, superficial, and agreeable', Lamb refers to 'the passing pageant of an evening', 'Idle gallantry in a fiction, a dream', and to the

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characters as those for whom 'you absolutely care nothing', 'vain and worthless' 'puppets' and 'dolls'. Macaulay was quite correct when he wrote that 'If what Mr. Charles Lamb says were correct, the inference would be that these dramatists did not in the least understand the very first principles of their craft'. It is this inference Lamb suppresses in an essay of personal recollections in which he is the advocate for a particular method of acting in artificial comedy, and of a strongly-held view of the relation between literature and life. He enjoyed the older stylized way of acting artificial comedy as exemplified by Bannister and Palmer too much to watch it being stifled by an 'insipid levelling morality'. Unlike tragedy, comedy required acting and stage performance to enable it to be appreciated, and this, not the cessation of Hunt's *Reflector*, is perhaps why Lamb never fulfilled his promise of a sequel to his essay on the tragedies of Shakespeare. His insistence on the stage performance of Restoration Comedy recognises both the artificiality of the genre and the enjoyment of the audience. His argument is as effective against those twentieth-century critics who dismiss the comedy as 'dull', 'boring', and 'prosaic', as it was against the Bowdlers of the early nineteenth century. Hartley Coleridge's early comment on the essay is still much the most perceptive: 'Nothing more or better can be said in defence of these writers than what Lamb has said in his delightful essay on the Old Actors; which is, after all, rather an apology for the audiences who applauded and himself who delighted in their plays, than for the plays themselves. . . . Besides, Lamb's defence of Congreve is like my dear father's defence of the attack on Copenhagen—unavailable to the doer, however available for the deed. It was the defence which Congreve himself set up against Collier.'[35]

In effect Lamb is saying three things in this essay. Firstly, that the stage performance of Restoration Comedy is great fun. Secondly, that our enjoyment is even greater when the plays are acted with proper attention to an *imperfect* dramatic illusion, with the emphasis falling on what he calls the '*acted* villany'[36] of the characters. Finally, that literature, and art in general, has suffered too much in the past from the improper transference of realistic criteria.

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Art is not life, however closely related they might be. This last is the major preoccupation in all Lamb's greatest essays. In this case, however, the exemplar of art—Restoration Comedy—is an inadequate symbol, the imaginative flimsiness of which Lamb suppresses in the interests of his argument for the imaginative or poetic over the abstract and real. If such suppression seems improbable, we need only turn to Lamb's essay on the paintings of John Martin which supports what might, at first sight, appear to be a purely arbitrary distinction. In that essay, 'Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art', Lamb gives an analysis of Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* from which it would be natural to infer that he liked the painting very much, and that he had no serious reservations about it. Yet in a letter to Wordsworth in May 1833 he wrote:

> Thank you for your cordial reception of Elia. Inter nos the Ariadne is not a darling with me, several incongruous things are in it, but in the composition it served me as illustrative.[37]

In the same way, Restoration Comedy 'served' Lamb as 'illustrative', although there were 'several incongruous things' in it.

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NOTES

[1]*The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. E. W. Marrs (Ithaca, N.Y., 1975–), I, 54.

[2]*The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas (London, 1903–5), *Specimens*, IV, xi–xii.

[3]Lamb himself uses the phrase 'dramatic morality' to characterize the moral commonplaces of the contemporary theatre: 'We have a common stock of dramatic morality out of which a writer may be supplied without the trouble of copying it from originals within his own breast', ibid., IV, 115.

[4]ibid., 'New Year's Eve', II, 29.

[5]ibid., *Specimens*, IV, 114.

[6]*Letters*, I, 163.

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[7]ibid., I, 265.
[8]*Works*, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare', I, 108.
[9]*Letters*, II, 9.
[10]*Works*, 'Extracts from the Garrick Plays', IV, 401.
[11]ibid., 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth', I, 82.
[12]ibid., I, 81–2.
[13]ibid., 'Specimens from the Writings of Fuller,' I, 118.
[14]ibid., 'Hogarth', I, 84.
[15]ibid., *Specimens*, IV, 114.
[16]*The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. R. Ingpen and W. E. Peck (London, 1926–30), 'On Life', VI, 194.
[17]*Works*, 'Hogarth', I, 86.
[18]*Letters*, I, 126.
[19]*Works*, 'Hogarth', I, 86.
[20]ibid., 'Review of *The Excursion*', I, 164.
[21]Macaulay, T. B., *Complete Works* (London, 1898), IX, 339.
[22]ibid., IX, 343.
[23]ibid., IX, 342.
[24]ibid., IX, 345.
[25]*Works*, 'New Year's Eve', II, 29.
[26]ibid., 'Stage Illusion', II, 163–4.
[27]ibid., II, 164–5.
[28]ibid., 'On Some of the Old Actors', II, 140.
[29]ibid., II, 140–1.
[30]ibid., II, 141.
[31]All references to Hazlitt's lecture on Restoration Comedy are to *The Complete Works*, ed. P. P. Howe (London, 1930–4), VI, 70–91.
[32]*Works*, 'On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century', II, 141–2.
[33]*Letters*, II, 245.
[34]Hazlitt, *Works*, V, 283.
[35]*Letters of Hartley Coleridge*, ed. G. E. and E. L. Griggs (London, 1936), pp. 236–7.
[36]*Works*, 'Artificial Comedy', II, 144.
[37]*The Letters of Charles Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas (London, 1935), III, 371.

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Coleridge's Hamlet: The Notes versus the Lectures

DAVID ELLIS and HOWARD MILLS

DESPITE THE WORK of Barbara Hardy and Badawi,[1] Coleridge is still commonly regarded as first and foremost a 'character critic'. In that light, he inspires more respect than enthusiasm: the errors of his ways are too widely known. After all, Coleridge is the critic who made the mistake of identifying with Hamlet ('I have a smack . . .', etc.) and consequently—the causal connection is more often implied than stated—romanticized the figure. In fact this all-too-common account needs a good deal of qualification, expansion and refurbishing.

An admirer of Coleridge might feel time is less well spent on this task than on showing (as Hardy and Badawi do) that Coleridge is at his best when he comments on specific dramatic moments in Shakespeare's plays. Yet full recognition of this truth is encouraged by the clearing away of misconceptions relating to other aspects of his criticism. In so far as 'the character of Hamlet' is concerned, that process involves in any case the establishment of a fact crucial to any demonstration of Coleridge's greatest strengths. This is that what he wrote in his notes and marginalia is in general far superior to what he is reported to have said in his lectures.

Coleridge made a very rich variety of comments on *Hamlet*, extending over thirty years or more, constantly developing and altering his thoughts. There are marginalia and other isolated notes; sequences of notes in varying degrees of continuity and formality; more elaborate outlines for lectures; accounts of lectures by newspaper-reporters and other witnesses; as well as the 'Treatise on Method' which centres on *Hamlet*. In some cases the order of material is clear: for instance, one set of notes, amounting to a lengthy analysis of the opening scenes, can be traced as they are later compressed into an outline for a lecture on the play as a whole, and then surface much more briefly in a report of that lecture. In other cases editors

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can only piece scattered notes together artificially into sequences: a task which has been performed rather differently by Raysor[2] and Hawkes.[3]

Only when a chronology for all this material has been firmly established will it be possible to be sure of the development of Coleridge's thought on *Hamlet*. In the meantime, one might expect its editors to print the items in an order as nearly chronological as is possible at present. This is in general what Raysor and Hawkes do. It is significant therefore that Hawkes, after opening the section on *Hamlet* with Coleridge's 1819 affidavit about his debt to Schlegel, prints next an item which chronologically speaking should come last—the 'smack of Hamlet' table-talk of 1827. (Another less notorious piece of talk, also dated 1827, is kept well in the rear, in its chronological place.)[4] Whatever the intention of this editorial gesture, its effect is one of deference to a well-established convention of feeling about Coleridge on Hamlet.

Probably the earliest set analysis of Hamlet's character occurs in the notes Coleridge made for a lecture which he gave in 1813. These represent the kind of half-way house already referred to, where comments on dramatic effect and structure made elsewhere in detail are compressed and connected in a more inclusive account of the play. The effort is to achieve a central point of view from which the whole work can be surveyed—a point of view that has to do with a root truth about the hero ('the Character of Hamlet' is Coleridge's own title for these notes). It is in the opening paragraph above all that the effort is clearest:

> Shakespeare's mode of conceiving characters out of his own intellectual and moral faculties, by conceiving any one intellectual or moral faculty in morbid excess and then placing himself, thus mutilated and diseased, under given circumstances. This we shall have repeated occasion to restate and enforce. In Hamlet I conceive him to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to outward objects and our meditation on inward thoughts—a due balance between the real and the imaginary world. In Hamlet this balance does not exist—his thoughts, images, and

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> fancy being far more vivid than his perceptions, and his very perceptions instantly passing through the medium of his contemplations, and acquiring as they pass a form and colour not naturally their own. Hence great, enormous, intellectual activity, and a consequent proportionate aversion to real action, with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities. (Hawkes, 174: c.f. Raysor, I, 34)

There are reasons beyond that of chronological priority for drawing attention away from the 'smack' paragraph to this one. Its authenticity is beyond question, coming as it does from Coleridge's own pen and not from that of a reporter, or a reporter of a reporter. And it is in itself more interesting and intelligent, especially in so far as it holds the seeds of several fine insights which Coleridge develops more explicitly elsewhere.

The last sentence in the paragraph is the most familiar. This is because Bradley in his *Shakespearean Tragedy* chose it to represent the Coleridgean half of what he called the Schlegel-Coleridge view of Hamlet's character. It is symptomatic of a narrowing of critical attention over the intervening century that Bradley wrote as if Coleridge, like himself, focussed on the specific question of why Hamlet delays rather than on the larger question of Hamlet's whole character. By quoting the last sentence, Bradley brought Coleridge closer to Schlegel's view of a Hamlet who procrastinates because he thinks too much, whose native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. Because of Bradley, the Schlegel-Coleridge view is still often regarded as Coleridge's own. The last sentence of the paragraph above is thus considered out of context and made to bear a disproportionate amount of weight. However, the paragraph as a whole is in no way favourable to Hamlet. Here at least he is not 'romanticized' in the common meaning of that term. So that while Coleridge may well have identified with Hamlet, this paragraph brings home the obvious truth that self-identification need not inevitably lead to self-glorification. It can also operate, as it may be doing here, as self-criticism.

Bradley's understanding of Coleridge's diagnosis was so narrowed down to 'excess of thought' that he shared

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Dowden's objection that it 'neglects the emotional side of Hamlet's character'. Nevertheless Coleridge's chief preoccupation in the paragraph is not with thinking too much, as one would now understand the phrase, but with a more fundamental problem of perception. If it is true therefore to say that Coleridge 'romanticizes' Hamlet, it is true here only in the sense that he relates the character to a major concern of his own day. 'A due balance between our attention to outward objects and our meditation on inward thoughts—a due balance between the real and the imaginary world'—that is immediately recognizable as a concern central to the work of both Coleridge and Wordsworth, and one to which they are able to relate nearly all moral and aesthetic problems. Indeed the stress Coleridge here gives to reciprocity is if anything more common in Wordsworth than himself: it is Wordsworth especially who insists that there is an external reality with a claim equal to that of the outgoing creative mind; and who sees more clearly the danger of the pendulum swinging too violently from eighteenth-century notions of the mind's passivity to the opposite extreme of solipsism. But central to Coleridge too is this concern with what, in his praise of Wordsworth, he calls 'the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed' (*Biographia Literaria*, ch. 4). The phrase seems to echo the one quoted above about the absence in Hamlet of 'a due balance'—Coleridge valuing in his fellow-poet that 'fine balance' which Hamlet lacks.

For Coleridge the achievement of a balance between the real and the imaginary is a *moral* necessity. The most obvious reason for this is that in its absence, or rather when there is a strong bias toward the imaginary, there is a consequent 'aversion to real action' in the world. Yet the critics who have seen inaction as the only consequence of lack of balance simplify Coleridge's thinking. If for Coleridge Hamlet is not simply a man who 'thinks too much', neither is he simply one who acts too little. Other, less obvious moral consequences of Hamlet's relation to the external world can be found in Coleridge's reading of the play over the years. They are implicit in the paragraph in question, released by it for explicit development elsewhere,

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but dependent on the fundamental concept of Hamlet's character which that paragraph expresses.

Take, for example, Coleridge's treatment of Claudius and Polonius. The 'romantic' Hamlet (which Coleridge is supposed to have done so much to encourage) implies a proportionately more villainous Claudius and a senile, doddering Polonius. The play's structure is such that the more highly one thinks of the former, the less one is tempted to think of the latter two. And yet Coleridge is often the defender of both Claudius and Polonius. If that is usually forgotten, it is because his comments on the Polonius of II.1 ('slyness blinking through the watery eye of superannuation', 'the skeleton of his own former skill and statecraft', and so on) are quoted in isolation and Coleridge is therefore seen as merely rewriting Johnson's famous summary in more vivid and metaphorical language.[5] But on I.3 Coleridge writes that 'in the great ever-recurring dangers and duties of life . . . Polonius is always made respectable' (Hawkes, 165); and on III.2 his criticism is of Hamlet's 'spite to poor Polonius, whom he cannot let rest' (Hawkes, 169). Similarly Claudius gets his due in the prayer-scene; and the 'lesson on the essential difference between wishing and willing' underlined by his last words 'My words fly up, my thoughts remain below' is a lesson that Coleridge clearly sees as reflecting on Hamlet himself (Hawkes, 170–1). He takes this scene as he takes Claudius's behaviour in his clash with Laertes: 'Proof, as indeed all else is, that Shakespeare never intended us to see the King with Hamlet's eyes' (Hawkes, 172). The world of the play is not, that is, as Hamlet sees it. And the external reality he is inattentive to is in this case not 'natural objects' but other people, their opinions and feelings. Solipsism, translated into the ethical sphere, emerges in this instance as an unpleasant, self-enclosed egotism.

The notes and marginalia do also give some encouragement to a flattering view of Hamlet which is 'romantic' in the bad sense. But as the paragraph we have dwelt on suggests, they also offer stimulus for a reading more like that of de Madariaga or the early Wilson Knight. How far this is equally a result of conscious self-identification it would be impossible to know for sure. Coleridge's naively

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self-revealing remark about having a smack of Hamlet himself has led to the supposition that what is involved is a simple psychological phenomenon, whereas it would be certain to prove on investigation (if there were any trustworthy method of enquiry) an extremely complicated one. Self-identification is not inevitably an instrument of self-glorification; it can also be a means of covert self-criticism. There will, however, always be some failings of a fictional character one would be more willing to acknowledge as one's own than others. Bradley objects that Coleridge made the mistake of imagining Hamlet was as constitutionally weak-willed as himself. But an 'aversion to real action' can seem a relatively amiable vice compared with an egotistical refusal to be open to impressions of other people.

Although Coleridge's paragraph on the character of Hamlet is not in itself great criticism, it relates to many of his finest comments on the play. Its neutrality of tone, which allows it to operate as the central point in a subtle and complex reading, seems the more striking when one compares the paragraph with what it appears to have become in the lecture for which it was a preparation:

> The effect of this overbalance of imagination is beautifully illustrated in the inward brooding of Hamlet—the effect of a superfluous activity of thought. His mind, unseated from its healthy balance, is for ever occupied with the world within him and abstracted from external things; his words give a substance to shadows and he is dissatisfied with commonplace realities. It is the nature of thought to be indefinite, while definiteness belongs to reality. The sense of sublimity arises, not from the sight of an outward object, but from the reflection upon it; not from the impression, but from the idea. Few have seen a celebrated waterfall without feeling something of disappointment: it is only subsequently, by reflection, that the idea of the waterfall comes full into the mind, and brings with it a train of sublime associations. Hamlet felt this: in him we see a mind that keeps itself in a state of abstraction and beholds external objects as hieroglyphics. His soliloquy 'Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt' arises from a craving after the indefinite,

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> a disposition or temper which most easily besets men of genius, a morbid craving for that which is not. (Hawkes, 183; c.f. Raysor, II, 224)

Raysor (134, note 2) is surely right that this talk of balance grows out of the notes we quoted previously. If that is so, then it confirms in explicit terms what in those notes is perhaps too implicit to be crystal clear: that Coleridge does indeed approach the problem of Hamlet's character not chiefly in terms of over-reflectiveness ('great, enormous, intellectual activity'), but by considering his whole relation to external reality.

That link between the notes and the passage quoted above is plain enough, but the overall effect of the latter is of course quite different, 'romanticizing' Hamlet in another and narrower sense. The coming difference is signalled at the very beginning when Hamlet's bias toward the imaginary becomes the talismanic 'imagination'. It is clear at once that no character with such an attribute could be disapproved of for long. One or two disapproving notions carry over from the original notes—the idea of unhealthiness or morbidity, for example—but they are so submerged or counteracted that being 'dissatisfied with commonplace realities' emerges as more of a strength than a failing. This is mainly because Hamlet has been enrolled amongst the Lake Poets. The explanation of his feelings ('Hamlet felt this') in the anecdote of the waterfall—a favourite, recurring anecdote of Coleridge's—would not have been out of place in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. A seemingly inevitable consequence of this enrolment is that Hamlet is abstracted from the play. 'O that this too, too solid flesh would melt . . .', it appears, arises from 'a craving after the indefinite'; it would be more natural to think that it had something to do with Gertrude's re-marriage. If there is self-identification here, it is no longer operating as self-criticism, but at the service of self-indulgence. What was diagnosed in the notes as a moral weakness is here transformed into a worthy, almost enviable failing permitted (like so much else) to 'men of genius'.

In this report of Coleridge's lecture, there is certainly the germ of one version of the 'romantic' Hamlet: the artist

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figure, cut off from but superior to ordinary life, and allowed a fair degree of license because of his gifts. The notes for this part of the lecture breathe no hint of such an idealization. Perhaps the change comes about because of the way any lecture-hall encourages simplification. Or perhaps the simplification was in the mind of the reporter.

Whatever the reason, the process is characteristic. Most of Coleridge's best comments on *Hamlet* suffer a similar fate, whichever the lecture-series and whoever the reporter. The lectures say very little, for example, of Polonius, while taking a consistently indulgent view of Hamlet's bitter wit towards him and other characters. Coleridge irons out the 'and yet' of this note on the nunnery-scene: 'Hamlet here [line 103] discovers that he is watched and Ophelia a decoy. Even this in a mood so anxious and irritable accounts for a certain harshness in him; and yet a wild working-up of love, sporting with opposites with a wilful, self-tormenting irony is perceptible throughout' (Hawkes, 168–9). The lectures also say nothing of the King's words in the prayer-scene, and on the prince's speech give a simple attack on Johnson and a virtually unqualified acquittal of Hamlet: 'the fact is, however, that Dr. Johnson did not understand the character of Hamlet, and censured accordingly. This, allow me to press on you most emphatically, was merely the excuse Hamlet made to himself'. And in this crucial instance at least, the more authentic text of Collier's account of this lecture, already published by R. A. Foakes, does not bail Coleridge out: the wording differs, and the slap at Johnson is softened, but the essential reading of the scene and the acquittal of Hamlet remain the same.[6]

It should be added that the notes on the other dramatic topics pursued by Hardy and Badawi show in comparison with the lecture reports the same higher degree of subtlety and sharpness as well as a greater fullness of detail. One might compare, for instance, the fine note on Hamlet's wassailing-speech with the cramped and mangled version in the lecture-reports of 1813 (Hawkes, 165, 184–5; Raysor, I, 22–3; II, 225). When compared with these examples, the change suffered by the paragraph on 'The Character of Hamlet' may appear less important. But we have dwelt on

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it, as an illustration of the general superiority of the notes and marginalia, because it is by his thoughts on Hamlet's character that Coleridge is still best known. Our intention has been to show that, even in that area, the common account needs emendation.

That it is common is because Coleridge is 'known' too largely from second-hand accounts. More often than not it is at third-hand, for many guides take their Coleridge not direct but from Bradley's brief and misleading summary. The 'Reader's Guide', for instance, in *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, V* quotes (as does Dover Wilson in his *What Happens in Hamlet*) only the sentence Bradley quoted and, like Bradley again, quotes nothing else from Coleridge's other writings in the play. Nicholas Brooke, in his *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies,* calls the sentence Coleridge's 'central observation about the play, and the one most justly remembered'. John Jump, in the Oxford series of *Select Bibliographical Guides*, shortens the circuit further by offering as a summary of Coleridge a paraphrase of Bradley's gloss on his quotation. And Jump's *Casebook* introduction draws on the sentence Bradley quoted, amalgamated with the 'smack' remark. When such guides go further afield for their quotations it is rarely for more than one or two sentences from the table-talk passage, 'the heresy in a nutshell' (as Barbara Hardy calls it) with which we began.

The prevailing feeling is clearly that Coleridge on Hamlet can indeed be bounded in a nutshell, and that a brief summary is all students need. They may get a sample (if not the best bits) in the back of the Signet edition or the front of the Casebook, but it will be there to represent bygone glimerings as the prelude to the full light of modern understanding.[7] As for the whole of Coleridge on the play, it can no longer be had for money. Although some old stocks of Raysor's first volume are available for the time being, his edition has been droppped permanently by Everyman's, while Hawkes's edition went out of print for good several years ago.

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NOTES

[1]B. Hardy, '"I Have a Smack of Hamlet": Coleridge and Shakespeare's Characters', in *Essays in Criticism*, VIII, (1958); M. M. Badawi, 'Coleridge's Formal Criticism of Shakespeare's Plays', ibid. X (1960), and *Coleridge Critic of Shakespeare* (1973).

[2]*Coleridge: Shakespearian Criticism*, Everyman, 2 vols. (1930), new edition 1960.

[3]*Coleridge on Shakespeare*, Penguin 1969 (originally publ. in U.S.A. as *Coleridge's Writings on Shakespeare*, Putnam's Sons, 1959).

[4]Hawkes, pp. 158 and 185. Both editors otherwise attempt to follow chronology, but after having first separated the sequence of notes and marginalia from the lecture reports. Hawkes makes this separation within his sections in each play; Raysor divides the whole of the material between his two volumes.

[5]Hawkes p. 166. The comment is indeed close to Johnson, but it has no equivalent of Johnson's last sentence: 'This idea of dotage encroaching upon wisdom will solve all the phenomena of the character of Polonius'. Coleridge's concern with the root truth about a character is never reduced to that kind of hunt for a skeleton key; with Polonius in particular, his notes show him ready to record inconsistent impressions and to fend off generalizations and conclusions.

[6]*Coleridge on Shakespeare: The Text of the Lectures of 1811–12*, ed. R. A. Foakes (1971), p. 127.

[7]For the Casebook, modern criticism begins after the Second World War: the 'extracts from earlier critics, 1710–1945' quote the Table Talk and the lectures. The Signet quotes the 1811–12 lecture only.

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Book Reviews

THE METONYMIC AND THE POETIC

The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature. by DAVID LODGE. Edward Arnold, 1977; £8.95. Cornell University Press, 1977; $17.50.

Roman Jakobson's classification of literary works by the degree to which they lean toward the metaphoric or the metonymic 'poles' is widely known but, it seems, generally not well understood. Those poles are prominent in the criticism of, among others, Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, and Hayden White, not to mention Lévi-Strauss, yet no one before David Lodge has sought to explain, directly and fully, how the dyad applies to literature and criticism. Jakobson, as Lodge says, touched on the literary application mainly in the brief, elliptical coda to a paper on speech disorders ('Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances', in *Fundamentals of Language*, Mouton, 1956). The sword has lain too long in the stone, and Lodge has usefully managed to extract it—except, I think, for part of the point.

He tries to do too much. Part I sensibly calls for a disinterested way of describing different sorts of literature ranging from the realistic to the pointedly imaginative, a typology that concentrates on form. Part II presents Jakobson's theory, somewhat augmented, as a means to that end. But Part III, a series of connected essays, applies the theory to modernism (Joyce, Stein, Hemingway, Lawrence, and Woolf), to anti-modernism (Orwell, Larkin, and others), and to post-modernism (Barthelme and others), and the book, though always economical, informative, and suggestive about the movements and the writers, gets out of hand because, despite Lodge's explicit attention in the second part to theory, he does not grasp it firmly enough. He does, however, write very well—his gift for exposition especially evident in considerate pacing and judicious comparison of passages. He knows that critical commentary on Jakobson's distinctions is worthwhile even if the commentator does

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not get everything right, and his candour helps the reader—to disagree if necessary. This is structuralism by daylight.

The main problem is that Lodge's definitions of the central, polar terms are perfunctory (though not so casual as Jakobson's in the essay on aphasia). Thus, where he should least do so, Lodge perpetuates a blur. Jakobson speaks broadly of paired, opposing principles, the metaphoric and the metonymic, according to which words are selected for and combined in sentences and larger units. The two principles rest on a preliminary distinction, of code and message, much like Saussure's *langue* and *parole*. The message is an actual sentence: for example (Lodge's), 'Ships crossed the sea'. The code is the system whereby that and other English sentences are formed and found acceptable, a system permitting substitution of *vessels* or *sloops* for *ships* (words in the same broad class). Jakobson's principle of metaphor is 'resemblance', as in the semantic similarity of *ships*, *vessels*, *sloops*. His principle of metonymy is 'contiguity', and by its words are classified together because what they denote occurs together; thus words for ships and harbours are members of a class though not linked by resemblance.

The stylistic, linguistic, psychological, and indeed metaphysical ramifications of this cosmic division tease me out of thought, and prescribe emulation of Lodge's directness. The most attractive possibility held forth by Jakobson's theory is a way of placing 'realistic' writing, defined as predominantly metonymic, securely within the province of the literary. As Lodge asks, 'How, then, can the metonymic be assimilated to the poetic?'. He justly chides Jakobson for losing the thread of this question after the essay on aphasia. There Jakobson had advocated increased study of metonymy in literature, especially because criticism, being itself a metaphorical meta-language for literary texts, had naturally tended to neglect metonymy and the 'realistic' literature characterized by it.

Yet promising as Jakobson's theory may be, it also presents three notable opportunities for confusion. First, the standard rhetorical definitions of the tropes metaphor and metonymy have been expanded so as to subsume all the other tropes, and more. Every statement is now pre-

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dominantly, at least, either a little metaphorical or else a little metonymical. This new use of traditional terminology, even if not confusing in itself, may cloud distinction between transparent and conspicuous styles. Illustrating metaphor, Lodge changes his example to 'Ships ploughed the sea'. Yet *ploughed* is here so exceptional, so specifically codified ('Chiefly *poet.*'—*OED*), that one cannot use it, unless writing Pope's Homer and changing *sea* to *Main* or the like, or cannot use it without turning the reader's attention from the narrated to the narrator as performer. Ships do not plough in *Persuasion* or *Mansfield Park*. Moreover, so broad is Jakobson's theory that 'Ships crossed the sea' must itself be somewhat metaphorical, somehow.

Second, there is danger of confusing the genetic principle of a statement with the statement's principle of cogency—sides of the same hair, it may seem, yet crucially distinct. The genetic principle is diachronic and the principle of cogency is synchronic, and they should not be confounded. Preserving the distinction also helpfully implies the need to recognize another genetic principle, that of reading. To produce a reading of a text, a reader must deal with the text's verbal contiguities and resemblances. Jakobson's commendable concern with the difficulties of aphasics in forming statements does not clarify this complex of questions, and indeed his comment that 'The development of a discourse may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either through their similarity or through their contiguity' is troublesomely ambiguous because it applies to the historical and logical genesis of the text as well as to the text's meaning and the process of interpreting it. The root critical question is, how does the work itself ask to be read?—assuming it does ask. Interested in the historical development as well as the nature of modern literature, Lodge capitalizes on Jakobson's ambiguity instead of clarifying it.

Third and most important—not least because the other opportunities for confusion are involved here too—Jakobson maintains that metaphor and metonymy are the polar principles not only of semantic relations (as when *sail* stands, synecdochically, for *ship*) but also of syntactic relations within a given statement. Thus, it seems, 'the sail of

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the ship' is synecdochic in syntax. (Although Jakobson declares synedoche to be metonymic rather than metaphoric, it is better to say synecdoche can gravitate in either direction, depending on the extent to which the part contains the whole.) Resolving questions of syntactic resemblance does not necessarily settle, or even address, questions about the poetics of metonymic relations, which are also implicated in Jakobson's net. But Lodge, when he transforms 'Ships crossed' to 'Ships ploughed', explains the change as if it involved merely a semantic, and not also a syntactic, modification of the sentence.

The central failure to align crosshairs with Jakobson's becomes very clear in Lodge's analysis of the first two stanzas of one of Wordsworth's 'unpoetic' *Lyrical Ballads*:

> It is the first mild day of March:
> Each minute sweeter than before,
> The Red-breast sings from the tall Larch
> That stands beside our door.
>
> There is a blessing in the air,
> Which seems a sense of joy to yield
> To the bare trees and mountains bare,
> And grass in the green field.

Verse such as this, Lodge says, offers the practical critic few footholds. 'Some of the words are arguably metaphorical—*sweeter, blessing, yield*—but in such a weak, muted degree that we scarcely register them as such. . . . In linking items according to contiguity rather than similarity, the verses conform to the metonymical mode, but they don't exploit the rhetorical figures proper to this mode very extensively either: "the Red-breast" and "the green field" are synecdoches even weaker than the weak metaphors just mentioned.' But Wordsworth is doing something; Lodge proceeds to write a paraphrase, which suggests 'nuances and ambiguities in the original text so slight and subtle as almost to be subliminal in their effects (as are many devices in realistic prose fiction). *Each minute sweeter than before*, though the punctuation indicates that it must describe the birdsong, is likely to be interpreted by the reader, before he gets to the "Red-breast" as referring back to the March

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day, partly because of this ordering of information and partly because *sweeter* is more often an adjective than an adverb in English. Likewise the second line of the second stanza, *Which seems a sense of joy to yield* doesn't grammatically require an extension of its predicate, and the subsequent naming of a series of indirect objects to which the sense of joy is yielded comes as a slight surprise.' The small surprises in these stanzas 'contribute to the general idea of the diffusion of the spirit of spring through all creation which is overtly developed later. . . .'

Though intelligent, this is what may be called a second-order reading—as if it showed the strain of being extruded from a paraphrase—and it is secondary precisely because it rotates at a point a little off the centre of Jakobson's theory. Although attentive to semantic tropes, particularly those of traditional rhetoric, the reading is neglectful, except belatedly and incompletely, of Jakobson's syntactic relations. The item *Red-breast* is duly labeled synecdoche, a rhetorical figure for the whole of the robin, but what is the item syntactically? Dramatized reading will focus on the dangling *sweeter*, somewhat at the expense of punctuation. Yet before making or coaching such a discovery one should perceive that the day is a part of March and that the minutes and the song of the bird are parts of the day—an expanding series of syntactic synecdoches. The song, however, also proceeds from the bird, prompted to sing by the mildness of the day; this syntactic series, interlinked with the synecdochic series, is causal, thus metonymic. The main surprise in these simple lines turns out to be their intricacy, yet my summary of their syntactic figures is not ended, for the synecdochic day and the mainly metonymic bird resemble each other in their mild, sweet effects. Thus, combining syntactic figures, Wordsworth elevates *Red-breast* from conventional semantic synecdoche to syntactic metaphor, for the month of March, which thereby gains a warm colour, a heart, a spirit, and a song. (A grammarian of the metonymic might be especially interested in the way resemblance of effects here transforms metonymy into metaphor.) And there is still another, metaphorically related though implicit agent, the poet-speaker, who by the syntactic fact of juxtaposition with

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robin and spring day is endowed, metaphorically, with their already compounded significance, while his *door* of the fourth line is assimilated to the larch from which the robin sings, and the *our* modifying *door* suggests a companionship comparable to that of robin and day and larch and poet, that may contribute to the poet's own desire to sing. *Blessing* in line five suggests yet one more, implicit, comparable agent.

Attention such as this to syntactic as well as to semantic tropes is required by the poem, more so than concern with *sweeter*'s shifting ties. In the second stanza, the second-order interpretation may begin to challenge mine for supremacy with the clause 'Which seems a sense of joy to yield'—not so much because of the unexpected indirect objects as because of the possibility of understanding the statement as 'joy to yield To,' turning the active, singing poet into an exponent of wise passiveness. Again, however, plainer syntactic resemblances may pre-empt more delicate perceptions because of the redefinition of the speaker accomplished by his confronting the emphatic 'bare trees and mountains bare'. Seeing the passage clearly with, as it were, only the semantic eye, Lodge thinks the stanzas metonymical, because the other, syntactic eye is hyperopic. Jakobson, pitching the genetic principle from composition to reading, at the end of the essay on aphasia accused most critics of aphasic 'contiguity disorder', thereby suggesting the possibility of a new discipline, critical nosology, a 'melancholies of anatomy'. But Jakobson himself lapses into *continuity* disorder when, seeking to define realistic writing, he says, 'Following the path of contiguous relationships, the realistic author metonymically digresses from the plot to the atmosphere and from the characters to the setting in place and time. He is fond of synechdochic details. In the scene of Anna Karenina's suicide Tolstoy's artistic attention is focussed on the heroine's handbag. . . .' These comments, though suggestive about semantic tropes, are incomplete, like Lodge's comments on Wordsworth, because not complimentarily attentive, paratactically so, to the syntactic relations which the word *handbag* forms with other items in the text.

Lodge recalls Jakobson's remark about Anna's handbag

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when dealing with this passage from Hemingway's 'In Another Country':

> In the fall the war was always there, but we did not go to it any more. It was cold in the fall in Milan and the dark came very early. Then the electric lights came on, and it was pleasant along the streets looking in the windows. There was much game hanging outside the shops and the snow powdered in the fur of the foxes and the wind blew their tails. The deer hung stiff and heavy and empty, and small birds blew in the wind and the wind turned their feathers. It was a cold fall and the wind came down from the mountains.

Here again, however, with telltale mention of something occurring to readers 'subliminally', Lodge only glancingly hits on the way a realistic text may be metonymically and metaphorically digressive and progressive at the same time. 'The war is going on in the mountains', Lodge explains; 'the wind comes from the mountains; *cold* and *fall* are connected obviously enough with death. In the context of these reverberating repetitions, the synecdochic details of the game hanging outside the shops inevitably function as symbols of death and destruction, though there is nothing figurative about the manner of their description. . . '. Here are the problems again: there is nothing *rhetorically* figurative, and surely the category of the 'syntactically figurative' should be available this late in the book. But then, laboriously, Lodge the practical critic makes the point he fails to bring forth in the theoretical Part II; he appositely quotes Jakobson, though the technical terminology will be clear only to those who have already formed the category of syntactic figures: 'In this way—by carefully disguising the "projection of the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination"—an apparently metonymic style is made to serve the purposes of metaphor'.

And do syntactic figures such as these fully enough embrace the poetics of metonymy? Generally a very adept practical critic, Lodge turns the execution scene in *The Old Wives' Tale* to good use, giving a canny reading of implicit syntactic metaphors and proceeding to isolate the

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way Bennett transforms contiguous details of the guillotine into metaphor through sustained concentration on two synecdoches. The grammar of interpreting such devices, however, remains undeveloped; Lodge calls Bennett's device 'a metonymic metaphor, or symbol'. How do realistic details operate not merely to suggest authenticity of report, or to combine in trains of syntactic metaphor, but to signify by compounding relations, in the verbal and non-verbal contexts, of perspective, aspect, circumscription in time and place, cause and effect as signs of each other, and degrees of difference between part and whole, genus and species? That question is not fully acknowledged in the book, though Lodge provocatively supplements Jakobson by advancing the opinion that metonymies are formed by 'deletion' ('we strike out *ships* . . . and insert *keels*'). The items deleted, he ventures, are not those 'it would be most natural to omit'; the deletion is not logical. Yet there must be some sort of logic involved, and that logic would in large part constitute the poetics of metonymy.

Thus the heart of Lodge's book is not, as first appears, the theoretical centre but the discursive surrounding sections, and although the critic finally seems wielded by the theory, the flourishes are very interesting, for example the historical observation that the modernists tended, as their careers progressed, to move from metonymy to metaphor. There are also many striking incidental remarks, on Leopold Bloom's 'synecdochic' consciousness, on the principles of Stein's systematic opposition to received ideas of metaphorical order, and on the worth of her work to Hemingway. There is no question that the book deserves thoughtful reading.

Had Lodge given more time to Jakobson's theory, he might have profited from attention to its historical dimensions and bearings. Perhaps good instincts led him to bring Wordsworth in. The description of Molly Bloom's monologue as a phonograph record across which the stylus of her consciousness 'jumps backwards and forwards' recalls Addison's attempt, in *Spectator* 417, to account for the odd, miscellaneous inclusiveness of memories: the animal spirits bound into adjoining, inappropriate traces. Sterne's digressive, progressive animal spirits, less casual in moti-

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vation, play with the idea, and so historically because of the pervasive eighteenth-century interest in what Wordsworth called 'the manner in which we associate ideas'. Perhaps most significantly, in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, I, iv, Hume broadly anticipates Jakobson by discerning only three principles of mental association, '*resemblance*, *contiguity* in time or place, and *cause* and *effect*', then of course finding validity in only the first two. But Jakobson, in his concern for semantics and the 'non-verbal', experiential and referential dimensions of discourse, and especially in his professed interest in metonymy, does not rule out signs based on causal processes. Metonymy is peculiarly the trope of historiography. The assimilation of what appear to be merely contiguous items can take place through perception of syntactic, metaphoric relations—seeing the robin in the spring day and vice versa—but also through less universal or perennial relations, including causal relations implying quite particular notions of process. The ratio of resemblance and difference between Anna Karenina and her handbag, the semantic distance between them, thus constitutes one term, one distinctly metonymic term characterized by contiguity and causality, that may resemble the distance indicated by other terms in the text, even if no other kinds of syntactic resemblance are to be found there. It may be that the most realistic writing is best analyzed with respect to such ratios of semantic distance: syntactic metaphors composed of metonymic, semantic relations.

As an example of the most thoroughly metonymic sort of writing, Lodge provides this encyclopedia entry:

> BIRMINGHAM (bur'ming-um) second largest English city (pop. 1,112,340) Warwickshire; a great industrial centre. Covers 80 sq. mi. Has iron and coal nearby and is noted for metal mfg. Most of Britain's brass and bronze coins minted here. Utilities and a bank are city owned. Has noted city orchestra. Site of Anglican and Roman Catholic cathedrals and Univ. of Birmingham. Heavily bombed World War II.

He explains, '. . . There is nothing figurative or rhetorical in the mode of selection and combination corresponding

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to the actual tropes of metonymy and synecdoche. The article is not, of course, a neutral or objective account of Birmingham, just because it *is* selective. But the selection of information, it is safe to assume, is governed by the general conventions and utilitarian purpose of the encyclopaedia rather than by the particular interests and observations of the author, or any design upon the reader's emotions. As a message it is orientated almost entirely towards context; or, in other words, it is referential'. Jakobson, however, specifies both verbal and non-verbal contexts, and the encyclopedia entry, considered simply with regard to the verbal context of each part, is not nearly so neutral as Lodge says. There is outright syntactic metaphor, the theme of largeness and power. Virtually personified Birmingham 'covers' miles, 'has' mines and an orchestra, and 'owns' utilities and a bank. Moreover, the series of items metonymically and syntactically reflects a plot or myth not utilitarian but positively Utilitarian or even Owenite, a nineteenth-century fable of corporate self-sufficiency—until there enters the unassimilable. Birmingham is merely, inertly, the 'site' of cathedrals and university, as if puzzled about what to do with them, or as if they no longer existed, and seems to find its having been bombed unforgettable but unaccountable (another testament to the city's noteworthiness were it not for disturbing implications of vulnerability). Finally, regarding the difficult metonymic matter of semantic distance, the text enacts a gratifying reversal as the otherwise only second English city becomes pre-eminent in a way, rising in the hierarchy of parts, at least to those mindful of brass and bronze coins. Like Bitzer's definition of a horse, the passage is poetic in various ways that Jakobson illuminates, though it is not art. Lodge deftly employs the formalist concept of 'foregrounding' to answer the question of what is literature and what is not, yet sorting and gathering the metaphor and metonymy of texts, whether or not artisic, remains the essential task.

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SPENSERIAN PARALLELS

Spenser: The Faerie Queene. Ed. by A. C. HAMILTON. Longman, 1978; £25.

This quite expensive edition of the most difficult English poem offers a great deal of illuminating judgment and necessary information. The common reader, students both undergraduate and graduate, and professors of English, will find the fruits of the latest (i.e., up through 1976) in Spenserian scholarship clearly presented by annotation and by the comments in the prefatory essays to each of the books of *The Faerie Queene.* All the scholar knights of faith from the golden age of the sixties are here, seeking truth, often finding it, and frequently unhorsing one another. Yet their faith in the intelligibility of this unfinished, allegorical, arithmological, programmatically enigmatic, historical-comical-pastoral-epical-romance has met in varying degrees with the proper reward of true faith, understanding.

Professor Hamilton, himself a prominent questor, in thrusting into the middest, has brought some order out of a welter of sometimes conflicting interpretation. Is there any other poem in the language about which scholarly judgment has left so many unanswered or contradictorily answered questions of interpretation? Professor Hamilton shows a good deal of even-handed justice in citing the views of both under and over interpreters, exponents of surface readings and champions of far deeper analyses—so even-handed that one wishes at times for some role for Talus.

The editor knows just how inexhaustible allegory is by its very nature, how especially allusive Spenser is in *The Faerie Queene,* how varyingly thick and thin the texture of allegory can be from canto to canto, and how necessarily shifting in intensity and subtlety must be the readers' response. Hamilton's basic position, with which no one is likely to quarrel, is that the allegory, no matter at what level or however polysemous, cannot be understood without a knowledge of Spenser's diction, diction of the sixteenth century, the etymologies of which, both legitimate and invented, allowed Spenser so much creative punning

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and so very much play of allusion. Hamilton's annotations restore Spenser's vocabulary to its origin in the sixteenth century, and his comments do much to show the extraordinary range and significance of Spenser's allusions—and it is here that some readers may wish to question omissions which are the result of both the exigencies of space and the need to consider the common reader fully as much as the scholar more interested in the subtleties of Spenserian syncretism.

Hamilton is particularly helpful in drawing attention to the considerable and thematically significant parallels between Spenser and Shakespeare, and Spenser and Milton. Some things he has missed—some important, some less so—but given the inclusion of those more or less important parallels, one regrets the lack of reference to items like the following. In the catalogue of trees in *F.Q.* I. 1. 9. 8, the 'platane round' is given its Latin root which aids the ignorant and forgetful in the picturing of the shape of the tree. Reference is made to Donne, *Elegy* IX. 30, and to Socrates and the plane tree of *Phaedrus* 230b, and the tree itself is said to have been suggested by the olive tree of the same line, a classical reference following a Christian one. Perhaps, but note A. D. S. Fowler's gloss in the Longman *Milton* on the 'platan' tree of *Paradise Lost* IV. 478, under which Eve first sees Adam. Scriptural commentators are cited as having associated the platan tree with Christ on the basis of an allegorical reading of *Ecclus.* XXIV 14–16. Given the many valuable demonstrations by Hamilton of the links between Spenser and Milton, the platan tree and its significance might have been glossed more fully —which is not to say that the opposition of Christian and classical in the line may not be indeed the better reading.

For a fuller gloss some reference in the death of the children of error I.i.26, to the demise of the heresiarch, Arius, might have been made, a parallel, like that of the cited death of Judas, long since established. This addition would link the vivid image of the arch heretic by the sage and serious Spenser with that developed by the subordinationist but not Arian Milton in *Paradise Lost* X.

Hamilton, who has written a study of Shakespeare's early dramas, is particularly good at pointing out verbal

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parallels between *The Faerie Queene* and the plays. All of this parallelism suggests that the links between Spenser and Shakespeare are more numerous and perhaps more important than we have usually thought. It is not Professor Hamilton's prime duty in this edition of *The Faerie Queene* to discuss Shakespeare, but as he has elected to draw some parallels between the poem and the plays, the opportunity was there to draw still more. He has omitted some passages which seem not simply parallels but Spenserian sources for Shakespearean themes and diction. Some fruitful conclusions might be drawn from the description of the figure of Envy in the procession of the seven deadly sins (I. iv. 30–32) with its venomous toad and bosom snake and the opening lines of *As You Like It* II. i. in the envy-free forest of Arden, and the symbolic snake in the bosom of the once envious Oliver in IV. iii. That Rosalind is an Ardenic Britomart, at 'all points like a man' with 'gallant curtleax', fighting the distorting versions of courtly, pastoral, true, and false love, is clear, but the particular diction of *F.Q.* I. iv. 30–2 and *AYLI* II. i and IV. iii suggests that Shakespeare held clearly in mind part of *The Faerie Queene*—one likes to think that the audience for *AYLI* at Wilton House in 1603, already pleased with Sidneian Calidore of *F.Q.* VI, saw other Spenserian elements in Shakespeare's pastoral comedy.

King Lear deserves further attention in terms of *The Faerie Queene*, beyond the obvious source in *F.Q.* II. x. 27–32. Buried in the notes of the New Cambridge *Lear* is the late J. C. Maxwell's observation that some of the description of the 'fall' of Gloucester from Dover cliff in IV. vi owes much to *F.Q.* III. x 56–7, especially 57, 4–6. I suggest that there is much more in this episode devoted to the one-eyed and jealous Malbecco in both III, ix and x, with its vocabulary describing exclusion from a castle, a storm, lack of courtesy, blindness, Cupid, entreaties, kennelled dogs, and a dotard's rage, finding its way into *Lear* in several thematically parallel scenes, e.g., II. iv, III. i, III. iv, and IV. vi, in addition to the 'fall' from Dover cliff.

Some attention should have been drawn to the parallels between terms in *Macbeth*, a play whose central theme of equivocation derives from the trails following the Gun-

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powder Plot and those of *F.Q.* V. vi. Britomart, Duncan-like in her vulnerability, offers an allegory of the circumstances surrounding Leonard des Trappes' attempt to blow up Elizabeth. The easy linkage of two attempted royal assassinations by explosion makes understandable the repetition of words from *F.Q.* V. vi. 14 et seq. in *Macbeth*, especially the scenes involving the murder of Duncan and its immediate consequences. One notes 'nurse(s)', 'sucke', 'host', 'guest', 'chamber', 'grooms', 'Belman', 'guilty', 'watch', 'wake', 'murdered', 'treason', 'stoln'—all in a canto which begins with the observation that it is a poor man who enters into the thraldom of a woman's will.

Within the text itself no episode continues to cause such vigorous scholarly-critical debate as does the Cave of Mammon (II. viii). Hamilton reminds us that 'cave' is something of a misnomer as Mammon is explicitly said to dwell in a 'house', somewhat 'Like an huge cave', an edifice the 'infernal counterpart to the house of Alma'. He discriminates among the chief differing interpretations of the temptation undergone by Guyon: it involves lust, pride and curiosity, or avarice, or gluttony, vainglory and avarice. These divergent interpretations are not always mutually exclusive, and it is agreed that Natale Comes whose *Mythologiae* is a pervasive influence upon the poem does associate greed and curiosity. Professor Hamilton and his predecessors have omitted a significant and, I believe, clear contributing source for the description of Guyon's descent into the house of Mammon, the garden of Proserpina, and his subsequent faint upon return, in Psyche's descent in *The Golden Asse* of Apuleius (Adlington translation) into 'the desolate house of Pluto', past 'the gate of Proserpina' where after refusing Proserpina's offer of 'delicate meat and drink' she succumbs to the temptation to open the mysterious box in which she finds 'only an infernal and deadly sleep, which immediately invaded all her members . . . she . . . lay . . . as a sleeping corpse'. However, the immortal Cupid descends from the chamber in which he has been enclosed in order to save her, not without an indictment that she had 'nigh perished again with . . . overmuch *curiosity*'. Spenser was at some pains not to conceal his source for he describes the salvific angel who demonstrates in the

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opening of the eighth canto that there is care in heaven, 'Like as Cupido on Idaean hill' (II. viii. 6. 1). Those who champion the idea that Guyon's temptation is fundamentally that of avarice may note that the advice given to Psyche preparatory to her descent involves her bribing Charon who, along with Pluto, will do nothing without reward. The lesson is: 'hereby you may see that avarice reigneth even amongst the dead'. Further, the outstretched hands of Tantalus and Pilate, seemingly symbols of curiosity, are suggested by the example foretold to Psyche of 'an old man swimming on the top of the river holding up his deadly hands'. It might be added that the linking of Pilate and Tantalus, the origin of which Hamilton states is unknown, may derive not from any supposed but now lost tradition of their conjunction, but rather from a simple process of association in the mind of the habitually punning Spenser as he read Psyche's remark in Apuleius when she rhetorically asks why she should not take a little of the beauty from the box given by Proserpina: '*Ecce*' . . . inepta ego divinae formositatis gerula, quae nec *tantillum* quidem indidem mihi delibo, . . .' But for the medial vowel and terminal consonant we have 'Tantalus', and as for 'Ecce' itself, it cries out in Pilate's notorious 'Ecce homo' of *John* 19.6 (Vulgate). It is well known that Apuleius is of essential significance in two other central episodes of *The Faerie Queene*: the garden of Adonis (III. vi) and Isis Church (V. vii). For both the proponents of the interpretation of Guyon's temptation as one of avarice, and more profoundly, those who see it as ultimately a temptation of intemperate curiosity, Apuleius is significantly present in a third central episode in the poem.

Turning from possible omissions, I note that the editor, free from the problems of dating and varying manuscript readings (although he does not hesitate to disagree with the 1909 Oxford text in his commentary, e.g. p. 645), has concentrated on bringing out the almost Joycean richness of Spenser's verbal craftsmanship. 'Platane' apart, he is very good on the trees without scanting the larger pattern of the forest. There are, rightly, no maps of the 'action' of the poem and no illustrations (although with so iconographic a poet this is a loss), but there are two diagrams

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designed to make clearer IV. iv. 52 and IV. x. 50–51. Some lapses in tone occur in the use of 'bitchy' on p. 635 and 'topless' on p. 664, both unseemly in an otherwise careful commentary on the most courteous of poets.

In addition, there is need for some correction in the next printing. The definite article has been lost and a space left behind at the end of the quotation in the centre of p. 164, entries 7 and 8 in the bibliography on p. 745 are repeated, the date of Peter Alexander's *Shakespeare* is a year off, etc. There are some casual liberties with names and titles. Some scholars rate only an initial in the first name, others a full spelling, even when they share responsibility for the same volume (e.g. in the Longman *Milton*). The order of words is changed in the full title of Berger's *Allegorical Temper*, and all studies of *The Faerie Queene* become studies of the *Faerie Queene* (on the authority of the letter to Ralegh?). Few of these errors and liberties are of any great significance, but in an edition so scrupulous in its attention to the smallest of verbal distinctions it is disconcerting to find any error at all. Yet one must add that in a book of this size with the complexity of reference and cross reference such small weaknesses must be inevitable. Unfortunately, equally inevitable is the varying degree of blackness in the type of the 1909 Oxford text against which the attractive type of the annotations is placed. The page as it stands is not pleasing to look at.

The aesthetics of typography aside, Horace would have approved of this edition—it will please the young and the old by giving both delight and truth, and by the price should make a fortune for its publishers. It is a valuable volume in a valuable series, even if Lord Burleigh must be rolling over in the garden of Adonis.

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SEX AND SEXISM

Milton and Sex. By Edward Le Comte. Macmillan, 1978; £6.95.

Milton is important, and sex is even more so; a book addressing itself so directly to two such important subjects might fairly be expected to have something important to

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say about at least one of them. Alas, Edward Le Comte's new book (his fourth on Milton) offers no seriously developed argument about the central issues arising from his materials; indeed the book is not even interested in attempting such an argument. Instead it fiddles with its subject like a puppy worring a bone—managing to poke at it from every angle but never getting to the marrow.

With ominous ingenuousness, Le Comte in his Preface justifies his subject thus: 'oddly enough, considering how big the Milton industry is (outstripped only by the Shakespeare industry), it has not been covered before'. Le Comte sounds quite at home with the industrial metaphor, presenting his work with the cheerfully moderate pride of a factory worker who has introduced a new type of packaging on his segment of the assembly line. What he most wants to do with his subject is precisely to 'cover' it, like a journalist covering the Olympics—to cover rather than to explore, analyze, ponder, or even discuss. There are bits of discussion in *Milton and Sex*, but they are fugitive, jostled off the page by jovial burly hunks of reportage and light-headed scouting parties of idle speculation and haphazard allusion.

Adam and Eve rightly get most of the attention, but there are also chapters that 'cover' *Comus* and *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, as well as a chapter on Milton's polemical prose with an unexpected and interesting emphasis on the *History of Britain*. The chapter titles imply a thematic organization of the book (e.g., 'Satiric Sex', 'Sex & Hell', 'The Perfect Marriage', 'The Imperfect Marriage') which is much less palpable than the author's desire to mention everything from his voluminous notes which might somehow be relevant. Yet *Milton And Sex* is a short book, and if the quotations from Milton and other poets and from critics were subtracted, it would be breathtakingly short—a longish magazine article. Le Comte is a compulsive quoter; the book at times seems intended as no more than a guide for research, surveying critical responses across the centuries; however, its usefulness in this way is spoiled not only by its unsystematic use of sources but also by Le Comte's habit of quoting critics without identifying them (except in back-of-the-book footnotes). So many

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unnamed critics are quoted offering opinions incapable of being well reconciled that the reader's sense of Le Comte's own thesis is repeatedly blown away: the author seems to be a comfortably dotty collector reaching again and again into his bag to pluck out an opinion and say, 'Ah, here's another one!' This impression is supported by Le Comte's candor in the Preface (again): 'I may also disappoint by not having firm opinions about absolutely everything; sometimes I cannot honestly make up my own mind, much less the reader's. *Que sais-je?* We're in the realm of the speculative. This being a survey, it is more my duty, as I see it, to present interesting possibilities . . .' Before reading the book one might admire the amiable modesty of this warning, and even reflect that many critics would benefit from such a willingness to acknowledge perplexities. But after reading the book one hears a telltale tinkle of fatuity in that friendly '*Que sais-je?*' and longs for the bracing arrogance of critical axe-grinders.

Does sex have anything to do with evil? When and how can sex be (spiritually) good? Why do women have less power than men in Western society? Should women be subservient in any way to men? These great questions about sexuality and sexism raise the issues that need to be engaged in a study of Milton's treatment of sex. To be sure, a book entitled *Milton and Sex* could wisely choose not to stray far from study of the poetry, but the great questions, sources of enormous confusion and pain throughout history and today, ought to inform and test the critic's approach to Milton at every step. Like most of us, Milton was intensely interested in sex, and he tried to say a great deal about it—about both sexual intercourse and the meaning of the difference between male and female. Though he preferred to appear boldly confident in his judgments about sex, Milton was profoundly troubled by it; and a critic trying to do justice to Milton's struggle with it must be aware of its profoundly troubling nature. Anyone believing, or claiming to believe, that sex (whether marital or extramarital or both) is just good clean fun, and that sex differences are simply part of life's spicy variety, is the wrong person to write a book called *Milton and Sex*.

One of the values of Le Comte's book is that it does

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demonstrate how much Milton was troubled by sex: the evidence is conveniently gathered for us by Le Comte, but too often he minimizes its importance in his effort to reassure us (and himself) that Milton was not confused or neurotic but admirable (with allowance made for his being a 'man of his time') in his forthright, vigorous, 'manly' treatment of sex. 'A sexual energy is the tension of his greatness' Le Comte writes. It might be closer to a useful truth (though a similarly facile abstraction) to say 'A sexual tension is the energy of his greatness.' Either way, the statement repeatedly misses chances of being explored because Le Comte slips away from serious questions with eely unction. Reporting the young Milton's praise of male virginity (as advocated in Revelation 14. 4) Le Comte remarks: 'Modern students may snicker, or be indignant, but Milton was only following not the Song of Songs but the Book of Books'. As criticism of a moral stance, this is empty, reducing an original thinker to blameless parrothood. Here, as elsewhere, Le Comte's inclination to dodge the crucial questions (why did Milton champion chastity so energetically, and how does this make sense as a moral choice?) is abetted by a tendency toward silly playfulness in his prose (Song of Songs—Book of Books). He is easily distracted from his subject by the glitter of a *bon mot* which is seldom the *mot juste*. His 'Book of Books' remark is followed by an interesting sentence quoted from an article by William Kerrigan, suggesting an association in Milton's mind between chastity and artistic immortality—but Le Comte accompanies Kerrigan's idea with no comment whatever.

Raphael's blush in Book VIII of *Paradise Lost* is a fascinating moment for anyone pursuing Milton's feelings about sex. If the angel's 'rosy red' smile is indeed a blush when he admits to Adam that angels not only have sex but sublimely satisfying sex, why is he embarrassed? Does this fleshly, warm-blooded phenomenon reinforce the point that angelic sex is not 'just spiritual'? If so, what are we to make of the fact that all the angels are male? If not, if angelic sex is Platonic, what false pretence on Raphael's part threatens to come to light and causes his rubescence? Or is the blush rather an unembarrassed manifestion of

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joy? Milton here is on the verge of some extraordinary statement connecting physical and spiritual love, and in response Le Comte comes as close as he ever comes to *discussing* important ideas—unfortunately not very close. Of Raphael's declaration (VIII. 620–29) Le Comte writes: 'It is superhuman, polymorphous, bisexual coitus that accomplishes mixing soul with soul in love supreme. It is every man's dream, and every woman's. Milton does not blush. He flaunts it, braving the reader's shocked reaction because of the depth of his own conviction that sex is not merely an animal activity, that "marriage must not be called a defilement," that flesh leads to spirit—therefore spirits scorn not flesh.' But Raphael has not mentioned marriage here; the possibilities of polygamy and androgyny which play between Raphael's lines are left wholly unexamined by Le Comte, along with the cause of Raphael's blush. What is wrong with flesh? This is what we want to know when we contemplate Raphael's supposed superiority to Adam in this scene, and on many Saturday nights as well; Le Comte dodges off the question with a haste more adolescent than angelic, while saying it is understandable for Raphael, and Milton, to dodge off the question: 'Little wonder that Raphael adds, "I can no more." As Bishop Newton observed, "The conversation was now become of such a nature that it was proper to put an end to it." ' Why?

Le Comte is similarly evasive when he deals with the quintessentially sexist line 'He for God only, she for God in him' (IV. 299). He makes the point that between Adam and Eve there is a mutual dependence, rather than a total enslavement of Eve by Adam, and then considers that he has sufficiently acquitted Milton of important sexism in line 299. But the fact that Adam can't be happy without acquiescent Eve does nothing to remove the grotesque dehumanization of women in this great Christian poet's formulation of their *raison d'être*. (Whatever tends to deny an individual's relation to divinity, to his or her spiritual being, must be dehumanizing; and where this denial is administered systematically according to gender, it is sexist.) Le Comte slips away from any feminist challenge into phrases scented with the sort of benign chivalry which is a stronghold for gentlemen who don't understand sexism

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as a moral concept: 'The differentiation in function seems to celebrate *Vive la différence*!, the "*concordia discors* of opposites in union." There is certainly no trace of the low view of women reflected, say, in the feckless heroines of F. Scott Fitzgerald or in such a remark as this in *The Great Gatsby*: "Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply." ' Out of a blue sky F. Scott Fitzgerald flies in to distract our author from the question of Milton's unfairness to Eve. Reaching the lines about Eve's 'Subjection . . . Yielded with coy submission' Le Comte finds occasion to note how sexy the language is, but it does not occur to him to ask whether there might be anything anti-human in this male poet's myth involving 'Subjection' (however gentle) as the essence of female sexual activity.

Le Comte thoroughly shows that Milton approved of coitus between married partners and affirmed, courageously, the spiritual validity of physical passion in the 'rites / Mysterious of connubial love' (IV. 742–3). This is an important point but it has been made many times before. (Empson: 'The praise of licit sex in the poem feels to me a splendid bit of nerve.') Earlier, in his chapter on Milton's youth, Le Comte offers plenty of evidence that Milton was not a neuter ascetic scholar but found women very interesting. These pages are worth reading, though the author cannot avoid frustrated and frustrating speculations about Milton's marriage with Mary Powell and other biographical matters lost in history; and ultimately we find ourselves back with the unimpressive truth we already knew: Milton was a sexual man who found women simultaneously beguiling and frightening.

Le Comte knows a good deal about seventeenth-century English society, and, when it suits him, he can remind us of the cultural milieu in which Milton's genius was formed. At several crucial points, when the question of Milton's 'misogyny' has been raised (or rather, acknowledged as an inescapable presence), Le Comte employs a traditional historian's apology for Milton: he was 'a man of his time'. Our surveyor assures us that 'modern historical critics have avoided vituperation in favor of showing . . . that Milton's view is "of an age" and is moreover fully supported, if not occasioned, by the Bible. (It is also Aristotelian.) Dowden,

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before the nineteenth century was out, declared Milton's attitude "Hebraic" . . . The sentiments expressed in *Paradise Lost* IV, 296 ff., on the difference between the sexes, outrageous to many a modern reader, were commonplace in the Renaissance.' Precisely. But surely a poet has value for us only when his or her sentiments challenge, transcend, or soar beyond the commonplace. Secondary historical interest aside, a (male) writer achieves greatness insofar as he is not 'a man of his time' but speaks to what we feel is the real human condition today and always. Le Comte goes on, 'Men and even women believed in the great chain of being, in hierarchy in society and creation. To aspire to a position to which one was not fitted was to invite personal and political chaos.' Here the prevalence of an erroneous scientific analysis is offered as an excuse for the era's greatest male supremacist. It is an apt excuse; but still a qualification of the poet's claim to greatness. If a writer based his view of life on the belief that the earth is flat, we would not be inclined to call him 'great' despite countless incidental insights and felicities in his work. To the extent that his work depended (not merely for plot purposes but philosophically) on the earth's flatness, to the same extent we would have to relegate him gently to the status of the colourful but unnecessary poets who populate the footnotes of literary study. A phrase like 'a man of his time' may serve as a useful reminder that Milton cannot be blamed for ignorance of air travel or artificial insemination, but it should not prevent us from calling sexism and dehumanization what they are, and from taking these anti-human tendencies into account in our assessment of the poet's value. Le Comte is blithely unaware that this is a problem, nodding to feminist complaints as if to eccentric representatives from an Anti-Defamation League for Snakes or a group contending that Eden was in South Africa. Women constitute more than half of the *human* race, and the earth is not flat; Magellan's lesson has been the easier truth for many of us to absorb.

The word 'misogyny' rears its ugly head several times in *Milton and Sex* but the author never faces it directly. He can only understand it to mean an unadulterated vituperative hatred of all women all the time, and wherever he

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can show that the case is not so clear-cut (how could it be?) he feels justified in dismissing the shaggy word altogther. 'Resentment and disillusion left scars, but he valued love—and particular women, both real and mythical —too highly for "misogynistic" to be an adequate summation.' Le Comte's strategy here is to define the scorned word so narrowly that only a psychotic man could be guilty of misogyny. Other critics have practised the same sort of shallow thinking in their eagerness to get Milton off the hook; Joseph H. Summers, a skilful critic, wrote in *The Muse's Method*: '[Adam's] hatred and denunciation of Eve; his wonder that God created woman and did not rather "fill the World at once / With Men as Angels without Feminine, / Or find some other way to generate / Mankind;" his prophecy of the "infinite calamity" which woman shall cause to man; all are examples not of Milton's misogyny but of Adam's Fall, his passion, his despair. When he says, "But for thee / I had persisted happy", we can only remember, although he has forgotten, his real state before the creation of Eve: but for her he would never have known his perfect state of fulfilment at all.' Tortuous questions lie unexamined here. Why must Adam's 'Fall, his passion, his despair' take the form of an extended eloquent attack on femininity? Why not upon God, or upon Eve *as an individual*? Why must the focus be on *his* 'perfect state of fulfilment' with Eve figuring as a necessary ingredient rather than a subjective self in her own right? Fundamentally, doesn't the term 'misogyny' have some relevance to a poet who allows Eve to be excoriated *as a representative* of her gender, while Adam is given centre-stage as the archetypal Man/Person who falls because of involvement with 'the fair Defect of Nature', woman, the Other, she who can never expatiate upon the evil of masculinity because it is too bound up in Milton's mind with humanity? Summers, like Le Comte, suavely points out that Adam is shown to be wrong in blaming Eve for the Fall: 'The Angel answers, "From Man's effeminate slackness it begins." It is a precise echo of the Son's condemnation when He pronounces judgment: "Thou didst resign thy Manhood." However much Adam and many masculine readers may wish to distort the issues, there is no justi-

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fication in the poem for serious misogyny: it is man's, not woman's, weakness which is responsible for the Fall.' Here the critic simply chooses not to think about the meaning of his words: if disaster comes as a result of that aspect of Adam which is enslaved to Eve ('effeminate') then femininity is disastrous, and we know where the real blame lies regardless of how much guilt Adam manfully shoulders. Summers and Le Comte are brothers in obscuring this connection while still feeling it. Meanwhile, note the insidious expression 'serious misogyny'—the implication is that only absolute monstrous misogyny would be worthy of serious attention, while lesser forms of misogyny are (presumably) only natural.

A similar example of cheerful thoughtlessness in Le Comte's book comes after he quotes the openly misogynistic Chorus speech in *Samson Agonistes* (1025–60): 'If the over-all effect is one of great sourness, it must be remembered of the Chorus that they lost their champion and their freedom on account of a woman. What other sentiments could they be expected to have? A misogynist would advise against marriage. The Chorus take it for granted that every man will have "his female".' By Le Comte's logic, a captured soldier whose leader had been blinded by a male enemy must inevitably hate all males everywhere. Further, Le Comte pretends to be unaware that the most important and interesting hatreds are those that fester within intimacy, not the simple enmity of segregation or diametric opposition.

As a male poet writing for humanity, Milton deserves great credit for Eve's heroic efforts to reaffirm love after the Fall (X. 914–36); Empson goes so far as to say: 'Compared to this victory through the generosity of a woman, all the nagging against women in Milton, though much the best reason why so many people dislike him, reduces to a family grumble.' Here Empson is uncharacteristically overgenerous to Milton, in a way that must have encouraged Le Comte to write, 'At this juncture Eve comes off very well and as no misogynist would have allowed'. If Le Comte had seen fit to write 'no pure misogynist', I would have accepted his statement, though not the complacency behind it.

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The important thing, of course, is not to attach labels to Milton but to see how he helps us understand life. Milton, like most people, was severely mixed up about sex, and a book called *Milton and Sex* that doesn't want to explore this *as a problem*—especially in the light of recent feminist thought—but only to 'cover' it as a topic, probably shouldn't be published, because it can hardly escape being trivial. In Edward Le Comte's case, the danger of triviality is increased by his desire to be witty and verbally dextrous. This desire tempts him into many puns and seductively nifty phrases which lead away from serious discussion, and he falls.

Some of the offences are simply clumsy writing, as in this sentence which sounds poorly translated from a foreign tongue: '"Streaking the ground with sinuous trace": we see that it is not *always* with this poet the telescope.' A sentence about Satan's envious spying on Adam and Eve begins thus: 'His own mistress not being what she used to be (and she never was!) . . .' Too clever by half. Eden 'is first seen as something Satan has been deprived of, one might say depraved of.' (A deft allusion to a lyric in 'West *Side Story*?) Of Sonnet XXIII Le Comte declares: 'The sonnet is a combination of art with unmistakable feeling, Milton's forte. . . .' One wonders what different fortes Le Comte would assign to other poets. Silliness slides in most swiftly when word-play interests him. Glossing a phrase in Milton's Cambridge Manuscript he says 'If the present-day reader thinks "gitterning" means "guitaring," he is correct'. Le Comte credits Milton with puns that I don't hear, as when he associates Milton's Chaos with 'the filthy and engulfing female': 'the wasteful deep' is also 'waist-full', 'the secrets of the hoary deep' are also the 'privy parts' of the whore-like deep. This could be a sound reading, but Le Comte's tendency to cast both Milton and himself as brilliant Nabokovs is ill-considered. Sex jokes let him down; describing Adam on the verge of falling, Le Comte writes: 'He responds like a man with an erection, "Bone of my bone thou art."' Strangely silly. But the most bemusing bit of sexual silliness in Le Comte's prose is this comment on Sin: 'With "wide Cerberean mouths" we are back to previous associations of gluttony and sex.

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One mouth, another mouth—how much difference is there, as such indulgences as fellatio and cunnilingus prove?'

Pseudo-humorous shorthand treatments of complex subjects are numerous in this small 'survey', sharpening our sense that no urgency fuels it. *Milton and Sex* is an amusing way to jog one's thoughts about Milton and sex, but it is a strikingly unnecessary book.

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NO JUBILATION

Samuel Beckett: a biography. By DEIRDRE BAIR. Jonathan Cape, 1978; £8.50.

Insofar as it is customary for even the most impulsive of biographers to allow a decent interval to elapse between the death of his subject and the publication of an intimate life, Deirdre Bair's biography of Samuel Beckett must be considered one of the most remarkable enterprises of its kind. But her indomitable *sangfroid* in respect of how Beckett himself might feel about her project makes the reading of this book a painful experience. Anyone who cares for Beckett, whether as man or writer, will be prompted to wonder whether his decision 'neither to help nor hinder' Mrs Bair was, in the circumstances, altogether wise, and cannot but be struck by the way in which his insouciance has been rewarded with a portrait of heartless candour. To have spent so long a time on Beckett's life and learnt none of the sensitivity that is the hallmark of the man is sufficient in itself to call in question Mrs Bair's aptitude for her task, and to remind one that the genre of biography requires of its practitioner gifts far removed from the crime reports and gossip-columns of the tabloids.

The primary impulse towards writing the book, on Mrs Bair's own admission, was her dissatisfaction with 'existing studies of [Beckett's] writings' and her belief that all subsequent exegesis should be based on 'a factual foundation'. It is possible to share Mrs Bair's dissatisfaction with the former without believing that the latter is desirable, or even feasible. Almost all great creative artists believe that what matters is not the life but the work, that 'l'auteur', in Beckett's words, 'ça n'est jamais intéressant'.

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It was perhaps a vague awareness of the truth of this that prompted Mrs Bair to 'concentrate on the life of Samuel Beckett's mind' without the products of which, we may safely say, this book would not need to have been written. But 'the life of Beckett's mind' can mean at least two, quite different things, and readers who expect an intellectual biography will come away very disappointed from reading six hundred pages of what Mrs Bair imagines to have been going on in Beckett's mind in the last seventy years. It would require (and has required) a more conspicuous intellectual equipment than this book ever manifests to write the true life of Beckett's mind. What we have instead is not unfairly represented by this, about Beckett in 1938: 'Now he could enjoy the beauty of the countryside, the overpowering lushness of the greenery, the meandering country lanes illuminated by gentle twilights. All the sights and sounds of full summer were there to entertain him, and when they ended he would not be there for the cold dampness of winter's grey days and endless nights. Paris was his home now. . . .' This sounds more like the mind of Gerty MacDowell than the mind of Samuel Beckett and, as even Beckett himself might have been hard-pressed to articulate how exactly he was feeling, ought surely to have been resisted at all costs. From time to time we do in fact learn what Beckett has been reading and what his reactions were, so that it will no longer be possible to find Sterne in the prose works or Zeno (an influence Beckett has long denied) in *Endgame*. Thanks to Mrs Bair's detective work, we shall all have to add Jules Renard and Eubulides of Miletus to the arcana that are a necessary preliminary to the full understanding of Beckett. But one gleans this information at a price, and is left to make the really interesting connections (as, for instance, that Eubulides believed that nothing was possible except the actual) for oneself.

Despite Mrs Bair's deep regard for facts, she is careless and unscholarly in her presentation of them. There are any number of disturbing 'howlers', and Beckett's difficult handwriting cannot be blamed for all of them. Trigny's *Hello* (which Beckett thought 'very, very bad') ought to be Vigny's *Stello*, which is actually nothing like as bad as

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Beckett says it is. Oliver St. John Gogarty's autobiography is called *As I was going* (not *walking*) *down Sackville Street.* Apollinaire's great poem is called *La chanson* (not *Chansons*) *du mal aimé.* The Gaelic name for Dublin is *Baile atha Cliath* not *Clathe.* The photographer Freund spells her name *Gisèle* and not Giselle. The German towns Hellenstadt, Guedinburg and Lunewald do not, alas, exist. The index and footnotes reveal a similarly cavalier attitude to detail. A more sceptical enquiry would have unearthed that Beckett did not, despite what Richard Ellmann says, read Mauthner to Joyce, but borrowed the three volumes from him to read in his own time. It is also a pity that readers should go away from this book imagining that the words 'Come in' are actually to be found in the final text of *Finnegans Wake* as an imperative, whether or not Joyce's dictation was actually interrupted by a caller and Beckett went on writing.

Faced with such a barrage of 'facts', it seem churlish to complain of details that have been omitted. But it is curious to find no mention of the ten-year-old Beckett with his father in the Wicklow Mountains watching the fire of the Easter Rising in Dublin, and no mention of the fact that Joyce did not much care for Beckett's acrostic 'Home Olga'. It would, perhaps, have mitigated the inadequacy of describing Joyce's death as 'sad news' if we had been told that Beckett read of it in a Paris newspaper. It is strange to find no mention of Beckett's friendship with Axel Kaun, to whom he wrote a most revealing letter in 1936. It would also have been helpful to have had some discussion of Peggy Guggenheim's claim that Beckett was homoerotically attracted to several male friends in the 1930s, however unfounded her suspicions may have been.

It goes without saying that the facts of Beckett's life may occasionally be found in his work. But to confuse the two is profitless. *Godot* can only be emasculated by suggestions that Vladimir and Estragon are really Beckett and his wife, or Beckett and a Resistance colleague waiting for a contact. Estragon's feet hurt because Beckett saw it that way, and not because for years Beckett wore shoes too tight for him in order to be more like Joyce. Even the most obviously autobiographical works (*Malone Dies*, *Krapp's Last Tape*,

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From an abandoned work and the poems) are not greatly illuminated by spelling out their basis in real life. The white light that dominates Beckett's recent prose ('harsh' and 'sterile' in Mrs Bair's opinion) cannot simply be accounted for by Beckett contracting glaucoma, any more than the sordid triangle of *Play* can be explained away by Beckett's putative adultery with an unnamed young woman. It is wilful to pursue these inferences when several indisputable connections between the life and the work are not made. Some are only trivial, like the fact that Beckett passed on his penchant for Lapsang Souchong tea to the hero of *Murphy*. But there are others which Mrs Bair might have been expected to make: Beckett's fear of the Forty Foot Hole which is referred to in *Eleuthéria* and elsewhere, his sorrow at a friend's suicide by defenestration which surfaces in *The Unnamable* and again (perhaps under the stimulus of the similar suicide of the painter Nicolas de Staël) in the 1956 'interview' with Israel Shenker. The most surprising omission is Mrs Bair's failure to relate Beckett's chronic shortage of money to the plight experienced by his heroes in the *Nouvelles* and the trilogy. Future scholars will obviously want to discuss these works in the light of Beckett's inability and/or unwillingness to be financially independent of his family until long beyond the age when this is normally achieved.

Beckett's life, as has long been known, has been a good deal more eventful than his fascination with quiescence and inertia would suggest. There has been as much success in the public sector as failure in the private. The story of Beckett's moderate prep school performance (except in sport) provides an excellent backdrop to his vacillating, but finally triumphant, university career and the agonies he suffered first as a teacher and then as a university lecturer. The absence of a youthful political idealism makes his commitment to the practicalities of Resistance and Red Cross work all the more attractive and impressive. The public insignia of distinction—the *Croix de Guerre*, the Nobel Prize, the honorary D.Litt., the International Publishers Prize—have been accepted with a modesty, bred of years of neglect, that compels admiration.

Beckett's private life, however, has been marked by any

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number of seemingly intractable difficulties and irremediable sadnesses. Mrs Bair's main interest lies in offering us a day-by-day account of Beckett's movements, a blow-by-blow account of Beckett's relations with his wife and family, and a cyst-by-cyst account of Beckett's mental and physical health. All these are dealt with in much fuller detail than any previous study has had the wherewithal (or the heart) to aspire to, and the outline which emerges is no doubt a substantially veridical one that will not require much correction. This is mainly because Mrs Bair has had access to the extensive *cache* of letters from Beckett to Thomas McGreevy, who is mistakenly described (five times) as Beckett's 'closest friend and . . . only confidant'. (In recent years, A. J. Leventhal has perhaps been as close to Beckett as anyone.) Without these letters and the correspondence with George Reavey the book could scarcely have been written, although there is certainly a wealth of anecdote and hearsay to pinpoint the more humorous moments of Beckett's life. To read of Beckett as school librarian inviting pupils to keep the books they were borrowing, as inebriated *poète maudit* hurling puddings into his mother's garden, as potential flying ace (notwithstanding his short-sightedness), as incipient collaborator with Eisenstein (who failed to reply) and—best of all perhaps—doing impromptu imitations of Mussolini at parties, shows (as one might indeed have predicted) that it has not all been gloom and doom by any means. When Beckett told a company of actors that all that mattered was the laugh and the tear he was not merely reverting to a Hibernian stereotype: he knew what he was talking about. There is something both sad and funny about Beckett reporting 'no jubilation, but *bien content quand même*' on hearing that *Murphy* had at last been accepted, after forty-two publishers had turned it down.

In recent years all that seems to have mattered to Beckett is generosity, and flight from an unsolicited celebrity. The most moving instance of the former is surely Beckett's gift of the Jack B. Yeats painting 'Morning' to the actor Jack MacGowran. Beckett bought it for £30 in 1935 because he could not live without it, and hung the painting prominently wherever he was living. But it was acquired with

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money borrowed from his mother and brother, and placed Beckett in a difficult position in respect to their persistent homiletics on the subject of a salaried job. Easily the best anecdote of the 'flight from fame' variety is the one telling of how Beckett impersonated his brother after being run to ground at his home 'in the Marne mud', which even very close friends are discouraged from visiting. The inverse ratio which seems to operate in the case of a man who craves to be left alone is a melancholy reflection of our perversity in matters of this kind, and is, of course, overwhelmingly confirmed by a biography as intimate as this. It is symptomatic, no doubt, that Mrs Bair should misinterpret the two telephones in the Beckett household as a sign of deterioration in relations between Beckett and his wife when, as A. J. Leventhal has pointed out—the 'Con' Leventhal whom Mrs Bair, in her index, seems to think is someone else—this arrangement actually reflects Beckett's concern that his wife should not be disturbed by the incoming calls pestering him. Leventhal, indeed, has made an important refutation of Mrs Bair's account of how Beckett met his wife in a review for the *International Herald Tribune* of June 29th 1978. Mrs Bair has Suzanne 'happening by' at the moment when Beckett is grovelling in a gutter in the Avenue d'Orléans after being stabbed by a pimp. Leventhal knows them to have met some weeks previously, which may not suit Mrs Bair's Hollywood-like predilections, but has the merit of being the truth. We can only hope that the dead have not been traduced like the living, and wait for those who have 'preferred to remain anonymous' to speak *in propria persona* someday.

It is difficult to imagine Suzanne Beckett deriving much pleasure from this book, and almost impossible to understand from Mrs Bair's presentation why she and Beckett have stayed together for forty years. Suzanne has been unflatteringly portrayed before, of course, in the memoirs of Peggy Guggenheim, but this was hardly an unbiased portrait and at least she was not named. Suzanne's tireless efforts on her husband's behalf are made by Mrs Bair to sound like egomania, and the portrayal of her as little more than a seamstress in the latter half of the book sorts oddly with her considerable musical accomplishment and her

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quick-wittedness under the eyes of the Gestapo. It is clear that Beckett's relationships with women previous to Suzanne ran into difficulties that were largely of his own (or his mother's) making. It is also quite clear that a man subject to psychosomatic disorders of an appallingly physical kind and recurrent nervous breakdowns must be difficult to live with. But Beckett would hardly have gone to such elaborate lengths to legalize his union (in Folkestone, of all places) if he had not felt a certain amount of affection for Suzanne, and it is hard to feel that, for all her doggedness, Mrs Bair has presented an adequate image of Beckett's marriage. It would be a relief to record that this was also the case with the depiction of Beckett's health, but the charting of each anthrax, anal cyst, decayed tooth and headache is too thoroughgoing for us to doubt the accuracy of it, and is buttressed by information from a number of doctors and psychoanalysts who must have violated the Hippocratic oath on countless occasions. All one can quarrel with here is whether an already sad story need have been so unsparingly eviscerated. The 'life of Beckett's mind' is too close, in this book, to the death of Beckett's body for anyone to feel satisfied by it, however Cartesian he (and we) may be.

If Mrs Bair could have been prevailed upon to confine herself to Beckett's early years, which is where her most substantial contributions are to be found, her book would have been much improved. But even as it stands, with all its faults, it tells such a compelling story in such detail that a large readership is assured. It remains to be seen whether Beckett's 'exit, pursued by a Bair' will inaugurate a profitable new epoch of Beckett studies, but it is already clear that neither Beckett—nor, perhaps, biography—will ever be quite the same again.

University of Reading JOHN PILLING

GEOFFREY HILL'S 'CHRISTIAN YEAR'

Tenebrae. By GEOFFREY HILL. Deutsch, 1978; £2.50.

Whether one's faith is in the Word or words, God, man or the Muses, *Tenebrae* calls forth a troubled alleluia. For what is to be praised? God's Light, the lean *lux*ury of

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human reason, or the festive brilliance of art? Is the darkness of the title our national apostasy, the shadows of middle-age, or obscurity that baffles understanding? If we receive the book as a choral celebration of sacred and profane Love, what are we to make of the character of such a Love in Hill's work as a violent and merciless assault? This book is Hill's most dreadful and abrupt commingling.

The book gathers-in and sharpens-up contradictions as if to make a sum of human disunity, revealing in such purposive concentration its formal design as a *poetic* way of the cross. It suffers the cross of disunity in order to become the integral substance that redeems and unifies. It comprises thorny contradictions. Is Christ, for example, a formal device created by human wit; or is he the Author of whose wit we are creatures, who ultimately brings all things into unity? the five sub-sequences of this sequence are open debates and open wounds; a formal stigmata.

Such apparent extravagance requires explanation. I should begin by making two points about *King Log*. In that book Hill sacrificed the notion of the poet as a visionary of Transcendent Form; the Blakean, and later the Yeatsian Formalism that underlay *For the Unfallen*. He committed himself to view the world existentially. But in dismissing the claim of poetry to know Transcendent Form, he left the way open to a 'purely formal' poetry making no claims to Transcendence. Secondly the title *King Log* points to a lack of a unifying centre. The book is like an incoherent democracy liable to go to the other extreme and elect King Stork, whose regime is humorously represented by Hill's own intolerance and violation of 'In Memory of Jane Fraser'. The spasmodic alternation of extremes reveals the need, if only in the realm of poetry, for a unity that can encompass the range of human contradictions.

These two ideas—the survival of the 'purely formal' and the need for coherence—come together in the Formal Engagement, the covenant under which he has worked since *King Log*. The phrase focuses into an area of mingled scepticism and mysticism his deepest concerns and uncertainties. It holds them in suspense between anticipation of what Yeats in *A Vision* called 'the marriage-bed', the 'love'

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that 'contains all Kant's antinomies'; and fear of a Victorian long engagement whose consummation is a figment of the imagination. On the one hand, in his engagement to form, the poet's only responsibility is to bring the exercise of technique, the creation of form, to the highest pitch. If the best form is religious, so be it: the poetry is to be a cold-blooded triumph of technique. On the other hand, if form is potentiality to be actualized, and since Christ's call is to a life of work in which he is made actual, the poet's cold-blooded exercise may be an obedient response to Christ's call in the sphere of poetry. Christ is the unifier, the breaker-down of barriers. In Christ—or the idea of Christ—the hermetically sealed and separated spheres (of poetry and criticism, art and society, speaker and audience) engage each other in a 'drama of reason'.

The distinctions (and the continuities) between the visionary formalism of *For the Unfallen*, the sacrifice of Transcendence of *King Log* and the Formal Engagement of *Mercian Hymns* and *Tenebrae* can be illustrated by changes in Hill's treatment of Time. In 'Requiem for the Plantagenet Kings' the co-presence of all time in the plan of God, the sea-rhythm of flood and ebb that governs history, and the chronological progress towards Judgement Day, are Transcendent Forms that the poet has 'seen' in the process of 'making' his poem. These forms are present in 'September Song' as inescapable associations, the smoke of a burnt-offering. One could, at least in part, reconstitute and construe from several clues—'Not forgotten', 'proper time', 'that end', 'vines', 'fires'—the religious poem that Hill chose not to write. The religious elements in the poem seem corruptions of language and perception, a part of our corruption, bad faith getting in the way of commitment to existence.

Mercian Hymns is committed to technique. The poem analyses and re-constitutes the linguistic forms of time which had been rejected in 'September Song' as unrealities not amenable to empirical application. They are still useful to the imagination in its creation of fantastic contexts. The poem makes the far, near and the near, far; it holds them in co-presence; it views history in terms of seasonal, cosmic and ecclesiastical recurrence, as well as in terms of histori-

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cal and eschatological progress. As the poem super-imposes or weaves together different models of Time (synchronicity, rhythm, sequence) it dramatizes an open debate as to their status. There is a dual dichotomy between the 'purely formal' structure of Time and the contingency of temporal data; and between the cognitive function of these models of Time in giving knowledge of this world and the possibility that they give knowledge of Transcendence. This enrichment of Time is a triumph of a technique which is as thorough, logical and premeditated in many respects as that of a philosopher or a scientist. Yet this fantastic and purely formal enrichment of Time is relevant to a society in which there is a 'flowing away of time into a world of things and specious communication' (Hill's words in a BBC discussion of Hopkins in 1977). However absurd the contest appears, Hill's poetry is one means by which he attempts, as Paul instructs, to redeem the time.

The trinitarian temporal architecture is a key to the formal unity of *Tenebrae*. The unity is three-fold. First, there is the unity of 'the return of the same', that recurrence of motifs and obsessions throughout the history of an art. Secondly there is the dramatic unity of a progress or quest, the development that transfigures what would otherwise be merely a series of repetitions and of metamorphoses into a history. Thirdly there is what Hill means by 'timeless colloquy', the return of history upon itself, the redemption of the wasted labour of the past. The serial voices of a chronological development join in a polyphonic chorus; timeless equals in a fantastic context which is itself the latest term in an historical series. Thus *Tenebrae* recreates an historical series of literary movements. It begins with a late-Mediaeval flowering of the Franciscan and Provençal traditions in Castile. Next it re-constructs the Catholic religious poetry of the Counter-Reformation. Turning to England it explores the maze of English religion from the dissolution of the monasteries to the present. The fourth section, the least structured of the book, reflects the splintering of modern Europe. The fifth section draws the sequence together, bringing the contradictions and transformations into the sharpest/closest disunity/unity. And in this section the history returns upon itself, goes back

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to its contradictory origins, in Section 7's echoes of the Franciscan Jacopone da Todi, and Section 8's use of classical allusion.

'Pentecost Castle' and 'Lachrimae' are reconstructions of Mediaeval and Baroque forms respectively. Although 'freely adapted' from a variety of mainly Spanish sources, their resemblance to their originals arises from the underlying codes and conventions that they have in common. The critic's analysis of fifteenth-century Castilian love poetry tells us as much about 'Pentecost Castle as a comparison with its sources would: '. . . we find a narrowing and intensification of the European courtly-love tradition. They used an extraordinarily narrow range of rhetorical devices, these being chiefly three: oxymoron, antithesis, and polyptoton . . . , all three expressive of the tormented obsession of the lover, helpless in the grip of contradictions, willing his own martyrdom but yearning for release, thrown from extreme to extreme of joy and pain, hope and despair. The rhetorical devices are not empty: they express the central experience of this kind of love' (R. O. Jones, *A Literary History of Spain*, 1971, p. 30). The chief contradiction is between sacred and profane love, both of which have turned to grief. The poem could be described as striving to transmute the contradiction and the grief into an 'ecstatic interfusion of the secular and the divine' (Jones, p. 87), at the same time as it makes the contradictions inherent in the underlying codes and conventions more sharply explicit. Between the disunity and the unity lies the way of the cross. This mystery of the Passion which Hill appears to be disclosing in the character of literary traditions and the creative imagination is the structure of each section as it is of the whole book.

In the same way 'Lachrimae' reminds one strongly of Southwell, Donne and Crashaw among English Baroque poets because Hill is embodying the shared codes and conventions that underlie their specific and diverse manifestations. The contradictions of Baroque poetry are even more apparent than those of the Mediaeval. Thus on one side there is Humanism ('self-love') and the classical and Petrarchan codes and conventions; on the other is Christianity with its systems of methodical religious meditation

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and prayer, such as that of Loyola. Conscious of disunity, Baroque poetry and piety stage a drama in which human wit and artifice co-operate with inspiration and grace to create the unity of the poem and of the soul, 'unity of being' and/or unity in Christ. 'Lachrimae' is a Baroque meditation which re-enacts this dramatic restoration of unity while making the contradictions sharply evident.

'An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England' is the richest and the central poem of the book. The chief contradiction that the poem adds to *Tenebrae*'s crown of thorns is between the perplexing maze of English religions and social life on the one hand and the Gospel Kingdom of human and Divine Love on the other. This Kingdom which the domestic broils of England have all but extinguished arches through the poem like a rainbow; an unquenchable vital light showing up the general disrepair and unpreparedness of the English fabric in a winter of national apostasy. But the very acts of destruction become epiphanies. A crucifix burnt by early reformers becomes 'the rood blazing upon the green'. The rose-window of a cathedral is enhanced by the iconoclast:

> Touched by the cry of the iconoclast,
> how the rose-window blossoms with the sun!

as if Christ and the Virgin Mary were blushing with love for their wayward children. This final image suggests a dual union of Divine and Human and male and female in Love; a mystical marriage in which the persons retain their distinct natures. Corresponding to the sweetly carnal mystery of Divine Love is the 'sweet carnality' of sexual love. The whole sequence, but particularly the final sonnet, incorporates the sense of these lines of Yeats:

> Eternity is passion, girl or boy
> Cry at the onset of their sexual joy
> 'For ever and for ever;'

This is also part of the Kingdom, 'an enclave of perpetual vows/broken in time', whose ruin is an epiphany:

> In grange and cottage girls rise from their beds
> by candlelight and mend their ruined braids.

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This two-fold gospel has in part escaped and survived the maze by elopement—that is, by runaway conversions and marriages. Isabella Thwaites runs away from her Mother Church into the arms of William Fairfax and Protestantism (Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House'). Newman and Hopkins run in the opposite direction. Against these wakings 'to sudden light' with all the mistakes which they gloss over or bring in their train, John Keble poised a quiet martyrdom to filial and matrimonial duty.

Is Keble, presumably the subject of the eighth sonnet (Geoffrey Hill attended the College in Oxford that was founded in Keble's memory), a godfather figure complementing the 'godmother' figure of the twelfth sonnet? If so, these Anglican godparents, the one a presiding genius of Anglo-Catholicism and the other the muse of English literature, may be taken as instructing the poet in his duty. According to Keble this is to keep to the 'durable covenant' of marriage and Church. The 'godmother' or muse also points to the need for a 'durable covenant' in the house of literature. There is a divergence between

> churchwardens in wing-collars bearing scrolls
> of copyhold well-tinctured and well tied.

and

> . . . the lost delicate suitors who could sing.

which threatens to end the line of English poetry. In this light the Formal Engagement may be an attempt to renew the stock of Church and Poetry by crossing the line of Keats with that of sturdy and eminent divines. If the integrative element in 'Pentecost Castle' is Franciscan mysticism; in 'Lachrimae', Baroque wit; in 'An Apology . . .', it is Shakespearean comedy. Though there are other presences—Marvell, Keats, Newman, Keble, Hopkins, Yeats—the ghost of Shakespeare is the master of ceremonies.

The fourth section of the poem is, in the modern mode, a collection of unlinked short poems. Nevertheless its 'arrangement' parallels the structure of the other sections. The title of its opening poems, 'Two Chorale-Preludes on melodies by Paul Celan' suggests a dreadful splintering of Christian Europe. Reminiscences of Luther and Bach jostle with the still-vivid memory—in the personal history

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of Paul Celan—of recent German history. In the final poem of the section the wreck of Deutschland is the occasion for the martyrdom of Dietrich Bonhoeffer whose self-sacrifice is seen as redeeming and restoring 'the broken themes' of Lutheranism.

The final section, the poem *Tenebrae*, concentres the contradictions and transformations of the book in a passionate final act, at once a hammering home of the sharp points of disunity and their absorption in the Body of Christ. These divisions—between the love of Christ and the love of women; 'light of light' and our luxury; faith in God and faith 'in our festivals'—mingle as a 'chorus of obscene consent': an acclamation of Christ which is also an infliction. It gathers up the disciples' recognition of Him as Messiah, his mock crowning by the soldiers and the Churches' subsequent 'judas-kiss' of devotion. The antiphonal 'single voice of purest praise' may include Judas, Pilate, the thief crucified alongside Jesus as well as Christian outsiders such as Simone Weil and W. B. Yeats.

It is a formal necessity of a Passion Play that the darkness of the Crucifixion be complete. The final section inflicts the sharpest contradiction, that is between the Body of Christ and the frigidity of a purely formal art. This is the frost of 'this dark solstice filled with frost and fire'; the cold of 'Why does the air grow cold / in the region of mirrors?'; the ice of 'the light glazing the light'. Art, which has the closest correspondence to the nature of Christ, is also the most antithetical. One is reminded at the close of Judas, Faust, Adrian Leverkühn; the possibility that the artist is 'the son of perdition' (John 17:12). One can see why certain sections and the title of the text of the cantata 'Ad Incensum Lucernae' have not been used in the book. (The Cantata, composed by James Brown with a text by Hill, was performed in Leeds, 5 February 1975.) In Catholic observance *Tenebrae* are prayers appointed to be said during Holy Week accompanied by a gradual extinction of light. The lighting of the Paschal Lamp belongs to another part of Hill's 'Christian Year'. To sum up, in words uncannily appropriate, *Tenebrae* is, to date, Hill's 'wild-worst best'.

BRIAN OXLEY

Birmingham University

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F. W. Bateson Memorial Lecture

IT IS PROPOSED that a lecture should be given annually in Oxford in memory of F. W. Bateson if sufficient funds are forthcoming to endow it. The lecture would be given at his own college through the hospitality of the President and Fellows of Corpus Christi, and it would subsequently be printed in *Essays in Criticism* so that it may be available to a wider audience. The Trustees very much hope that those readers of *E in C* throughout the world who have valued F. W. Bateson's work will feel that the lecture would be an appropriate way both of honouring him and of contributing further to the subject to which he devoted his life. Donations, large or small, should be sent to

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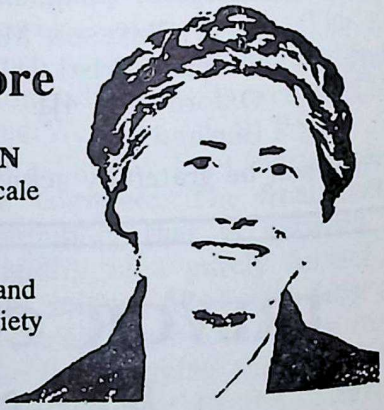

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ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

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A Quarterly Journal of Literary Criticism

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ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL FOUNDED BY F. W. BATESON

Vol. XXIX October 1979 No. 4

CRITICAL OPINION

Filming James

NICOLA BRADBURY

THE FILM, *The Europeans*, directed by James Ivory with a screenplay by Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, prompts both a fresh critical reaction to James's novel and further thoughts on the enterprise of adapting it. The two might seem distinct, one belonging to the film, the other to the book, or to the author. That they are so little separate on this occasion is a tribute to the sensitivity and discretion of Mrs. Jhabvala. Her screenplay is so steeped in Henry James that for the literary critic it raises questions of fidelity, not to the Master, but to this particular novel. Is this indeed the film of the book? Was the book, then, right for a film?

Space, word, and gesture are amongst the aspects of *The Europeans* which translate into cinema easily enough. The task of the screenplay writer might be reduced to mere transcription—and where Mrs. Jhabvala accepts this role she performs it with remarkable success. For setting, furniture, costume, dialogue, and action are there in the novel with the 'solidity of specification' of early James. Representing and embodying both the story and its context with a transparent clarity apt to film, the terms of the comedy, the romance, and the pathos, are made curiously visible. The location of *The Europeans*, through one of James's punning transpositions, is New England: the America of Emerson, Thoreau, and of James's early master, Hawthorne. James's familiar art and drama metaphors are transported here in the persons of Felix Young, the 'Bohemian' gentleman-artist, and his sister the Baroness Eugenia Münster of Silberstadt-Shreckenstein,

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finally a self-confessed 'strolling actress'. The Jamesian contest of 'picture and scene', both space-hungry in the novel and between them defining the subject, is caught in the alternating claims of these two personages on our interest, and in the intensification achieved in their appearances together. But the curiosity, the charm, the indispensible foregrounding factor in the novel is that in New England the Europeans are out of place. Here is the moral nexus of the work, for which James found a formal counterpart in the clash of the old world and new conventions. It is not a simple joke, this world turned upside down, for it revolves, in the romantic manner, on love and marriage, and there is in this social, if not quite society, setting, a sad counterplay of failed emotions and of exclusion, which gives the poignancy of personal pathos against which all great comedy shines.

It was James's bright idea in *The Europeans* to perceive the light of comedy in the almost daunting moral clarity of New England, and to compare this with the society glitter of the Baroness. In his book on Hawthorne, written just a year after *The Europeans*, James quotes the elder novelist with evident sympathy—both for his predicament and for his loyalty: 'No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land' (*Hawthorne*, London, 1879, p. 42). Eight years later, in the essay on 'Emerson' (*Macmillan's Magazine*, LVII, Dec. 1887, rpt. in *Henry James: Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. Morris Shapira, Penguin, 1968), the 'achromatic picture' was harsher, and James saw 'the circumstances of our author's origin, immediate and remote, in a kind of high, vertical moral light, the brightness of a society at once very simple and very reasonable' (p. 100). We can visualize Mr. Wentworth in such a light, and Mr. Brand. Yet the country, and the people, have gentler tones too, and James delighted in 'that tendency to weigh moonbeams which in Hawthorne was almost as much a quality of race as of genius' (*Hawthorne*, p. 51).

The Baroness, however, has come to America to make her fortune, and Felix to find his. She is equipped, and he

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endowed, with the old world graces, and the meeting of their drawing room, boudoir, and studio with the great outdoors tinkles with a social comedy of gesture and dialogue, but it betrays deeper undertones, poised between distances both formal and moral. In 'The Art of Fiction' (1884), James was to call experience 'the very atmosphere of the mind'; but this experience is realized upon the nerves, and seen most feelingly. From the first gaze through a hotel window to a last look in her mirror, Eugenia's life, quite as much as Felix's, is an affair of perspectives and images. There are poses, vignettes, facades, and vistas, while beyond form and outline we notice colour and tone, the values of atmosphere, and of subtle lighting. Felix's first words when he enters the Wentworth home are, 'What a pleasant house! . . . It's lighter inside than it is out'—though this is comically translated in the next chapter:

> 'Is it handsome—is it elegant?' asked the Baroness.
> Felix looked at her a moment, smiling. 'It's very clean!'
> (*The Europeans*, 1878, Penguin rpt., 1970, p. 32)

James Ivory's film is very clean too, but none the paler for that. The tones are rich and varied, from the red-gold of New England fall to the muted yet substantial browns and greys of the Wentworth household, the white and yellow of Felix's studio to the crimsons, creams, and blacks of Eugenia's costumes, and her brilliantly simple white. There is colour, certainly, and there is light too: sunlight in the studio, the woods, the cottage: carriage lamps, oil lamps, candles. But what the film lacks is Henry James's discrimination. In a slim novel, there is no room for such luxurious confusion. Like the distinct perspectives, the differing light values are carefully restricted to point the moral tone. Such economy is at variance with the cinema's instinct to open things out. As we read, we watch the Baroness, like Kate Croy in *The Wings of the Dove*, pacing for the first page of the novel between the window (looking out over unrelieved gloom, tombstones under snow) and the mirror opposite the anthracite fire. We do not, in James, see Charlotte Wentworth gazing into a mirror as we do in the film (a moment of self-consciousness more reminiscent of Hetty in *Adam Bede*). In the novel we see Eugenia by lamplight and amidst her draperies – 'What is

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life, indeed, without curtains?' Gertrude is moved to wonder. But we do not watch the Wentworths, nor the Actons, by night: the candlelit ball is a cinematic invention.

With loving attention, but, I think, mistakenly, the film adaptation of *The Europeans* has substituted sound for light, translating a peculiarly visual novel into a rather musical film. The action moves amongst strains from Clara Schumann, Schubert and even Verdi. Felix puts on a phonograph and dances with Gertrude round his studio; Madame Münster plays the piano for Clifford and Mr. Acton; the entire company assists at the Acton ball, where Eugenia flutters visibly at the exertions of American society dancing the polka: 'They're certainly—energetic!' So indeed she might have exclaimed; but in James the scene does not take place. What is gained, or lost, with this aspect of the film adaptation? It must be admitted that James had the eye of an artist but not the ear of a musician. To add music to his work might therefore supply a lack in him: pure gain—provided the tone were exact. It is not merely a matter of selecting the right pieces (and James rarely used famous works of art, though he exploits the minor masterpiece to the full): the tone here requires more than a musical ear. Because in the film music is being given some of the imaginative value of James's light, it must be used with a sense not only of formal, but also of both social and personal qualities. The music, the occasion, and the response, should have been more precisely conceived, and integrated with the whole, so as to measure and express the themes and the effects of the work.

James's stress on sight, on appearance and reality, posture and appreciation, though enhanced by Felix's artistic bent, clearly centres on Eugenia. Not only are her manoeuvres the linking thread of the action, but it is her histrionic awareness of posture and imposture, of intention and design, her display of French aloofness and of charm, her poise, and the darkness which awaits her failure, that give the novel its central nervous system. At the outset, we share her view: 'A narrow grave-yard in the heart of a bustling, indifferent city, seen from the windows of a gloomy-looking inn'. The last perspective is perhaps even chillier: when Felix parts with his sister, '"We shall meet often over there," he said. "I don't know," she answered. "Europe seems to me much larger

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than America.''' Within this darkly recessive frame, however, perhaps the most touching moments are two that the film captures movingly. Though one shows the Baroness breaking down, and the other her bravado, each is poised between display and revelation, poignant in both. These are the entry of Eugenia into the Wentworth family—'Though she was smiling, there were tears in her voice as well as in her eyes' (p. 43)—and her refusal, later, to admit defeat to her brother: '''Well, let me give you some news. You probably will not have discovered it for yourself. Robert Acton wants to marry me''' (p. 133).

Lee Remick, as Eugenia, delivers these lines perfectly. Unfortunately, however, they are her only such moments of exact revelation. The shift in the film to the musical analogy, and away from authorial manipulation of point of view, not only changes the balance of character and theme towards a more equitable, dance-like distribution of interest, where four couples share our attention. It also requires that the Baroness be more outspoken. She is given speeches she would never have made aloud, or in company. After her provocative phrase to Mr. Acton, of lovers—*'nous n'en sommes pas là'* (reduced in the film to a slightly less idiomatic, slightly less engaging, *'Mais, nous ne sommes pas là'*)—Mrs. Jhabvala has Eugenia ask disingenuously, 'Oh, do you understand French?' In the film it is to Felix, and not, as in the book, less humiliatingly, to herself, that she protests later, 'I hope you don't think I'm reduced to waiting for a visit from a Mr. Robert Acton'. And speeches which James has her make in the cousinly informality of the Wentworth household are transposed in the film to Eugenia's confrontation with Mrs. Acton, Robert's mother: a meeting, moreover, attended not only by Robert, but also by the pert Lizzie Acton. Instead of the single and delicate 'false note' of the novel, Eugenia has to bear the embarrassment of a grossly miscalculated tone, and a very public failure. Well may Mrs. Jhabvala have her say as she leaves, 'I feel, out of tune.'

The result of this rendering is that Eugenia becomes a superficial figure of mannered comedy. Too beautiful, Lee Remick creates her mask, but not the depth of pride, ambition, and desperate longing behind it. Once the Americans are permitted candle-lit dancing, the social distinction of the

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Europeans is slightly blunted; and when Lizzie Acton is allowed to grow from James's spoilt young woman to the film's rather successful minx, the Baroness's feminine wiles are also called into question.

It is not Lizzie Acton, however, who attracts the attention that Eugenia loses in the film. She and Clifford, 'Two such interesting young people', as the Baroness sweetly remarks to Mrs. Acton on their engagement, remain plot-fillers: young, callow, and, precisely, not interesting. Charlotte Wentworth is not a serious contender either. Her best scene, when Felix interrupts her sewing to beg her intercession on his behalf with her father, is a delicate comedy of maidenly modesty; but the interesting stillness of her own mirror-scene is dissipated by the irritable and unJamesian push she gives her sister soon afterwards; and her cinematic union with the good Mr. Brand is something surely only she could find quite so inspiring—it makes a shallower effect than the novel's more reticent intimations.

Gertrude, rather than her sister, or indeed her cousin, is the female character most powerfully suggested, though not most fully delineated, in the film. Part of the reason is in the casting: Lisa Eichorn has a gentle and low voice which shades well into the lighter tones of Tim Woodward playing Felix. Her appearance, too, is just right: developing from Puritanical plainness through a series of fey ringlets and a dryad-crown of berries, towards the moment at the end when the Baroness dresses her, not quite rightly, in shawl and trinkets for her coming visits to the Opéra. Though plain (not ugly), Lisa Eichorn has a strikingly proportioned face, and an aspect of inwardness, which help to centre our attention. She is, in a sense, nearest the heart of the film: her experience, proper to New England, but open to Europe, most central, and her sensibility the bravest, if not the most rigorously critical, of all.

This accepting and unassuming centrality is a counterpart in the film to the force of Eugenia in the novel, but it is very different. The aspects of film adaptation already mentioned, from the unremittingly rich colouring to the odd infelicities of tone occasioned by the transposition of dialogue from one scene to another, or from thought to speech, are all in keeping with Gertrude's unsophisticated eagerness for experience.

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The sense of picture and scene which belonged to the Baroness are not within the New Englander's terms of reference. Instead of the dramatic posture and the artist's eye, we have the ordered spectacle of the dance, and the listening ear. This extends towards the audience an attitude of acceptance, but diminishes the slightly disquieting analogy between author, protagonist, and reader, in a novel which is both about and propelled by manipulative enterprise poised against conscious appreciation. As spectators our enjoyment is less immediate, but we are beyond the threat of exclusion: like Gertrude, in New England society, but not of it, and welcoming the European experience.

Gertrude, Mr. Wentworth fears, has not 'profited' from Mr. Brand. The scene, of Felix's formal request for her hand, is one of the triumphs of the film. Every aspect of setting, action, dialogue, character, image, and theme, is interrelated—outdoing James with an extended play on words and images. The scene opens with Mr. Wentworth (like Mr. Brand, excellently realized in the film) reading out of the Boston *Advertiser* in solemn tones a deliciously comical application of commercial motifs to moral character supported by the parable of the talents. In the final tableau, while Felix and Gertrude stand arm in arm behind a dish of apples on the table, and in front of a serenely gazing bust of Shakespeare by the wall, Mr. Wentworth sits with his folded newspaper behind a large black cash box. Mr. Brand stands between the couple and the father, while Charlotte half-kneels on the edge of the group. Their costumes range from dark to light, the semi-circle is beautifully posed: it is a mid-nineteenth century genre picture with moral story, and Charlotte's title: 'Father, consent!'

It is not, quite, a picture from James's novel, though it is thoroughly Jamesian in tone, and excellent cinema. Elsewhere Mrs. Jhabvala has again improved on her material, with the care and sensibility of a James lover. Certain key words are delicately weighted: the Baroness's 'interesting', Mr. Wentworth's recurrent 'very sure'. Felix's description of himself as a 'Philistine' acquires a comical impropriety when addressed to the god-fearing Mr. Wentworth. Sometimes, however, Mrs. Jhabvala is more oblique than James. Mrs. Acton's gentle hint to Eugenia, 'I wish you would stay', is all

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that is left in the film of James's clear indication that Eugenia in her farewell visit finds Mrs. Acton dying.

Other additions to James's novel function perhaps most forcefully for those familiar with James's later work. The Baroness's poise at the piano, for example, links her with Madame Merle in *The Portrait of a Lady* and with Charlotte in *The Golden Bowl* as a perhaps dangerously charming woman. The caged bird in Mrs. Acton's room and the goldfish in the Wentworth parlour are also images adopted from *The Golden Bowl*, hinting at confinement and suffering on the one hand, but at the duality of observation and display on the other.

It is through such reverberating visual images, and not through such conventional tricks as the 'thought flashback', that Ruth Prawar Jhabvala and James Ivory have most effectively endowed their film with depth and resonance. Yet there are certain aspects of the novel which are bound to resist translation: the comical apprehension of Mr. Wentworth for 'the strange word "morganatic" . . . it reminded him of a certain Mrs. Morgan whom he had once known, and who had been a bold, unpleasant woman' (p. 36), or the interesting series of images which offer variations of the 'housebreaking' theme (a continuing fascination for James, and an interesting oblique light on the themes of this novel). A certain vigour is imparted to the prose through the similes of the runaway horse (p. 140), the greyhound doubling (p. 160), and the exhausted swimmer faced with a straight wall of rock (p. 129). Such effects are unavoidably lost in the film. And the devices substituted for such energies, when they anticipate later James, do not link with the very late tales and *The Ivory Tower*, which share with *The Europeans* themes of exploitation and appreciation, of the opportunity neglected or lost, besides the dramatic location in a revisited America, with its attendant provocative embarrassments of tone; instead they look forward to 'high James', and a richness which is peculiarly European. As with the musical effects, such moments intensify in the film, and in the uncompromisingly American setting of a New England fall (disregarding the cycle of seasons James uses), a richness more readily identifiable with old world civilization. For this reason, though they enhance our enjoyment, they do not clarify the

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drama in the same terms as James employs. The darker and colder tones, the hints of ageing, failure, and isolation, which in James's novel cast a shade in which we may weigh the moonbeams of charm, success, and joy, are absent from our experience in the cinema, and 'the very atmosphere of the mind' is altered in translation.

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James and his Sources: *The Spoils of Poynton*

BERNARD RICHARDS

JAMES WAS very clear where the strength and the appeal of the novel lay: 'One can speak best from one's own taste, and I may therefore venture to say that the air of reality (solidity of specification) seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel—the merit on which all its other merits . . . helplessly and submissively depend'.[1] His own novels contain any amount of this palpability and specificity, but the majority of criticism of James tends to concentrate on impalpable and theoretical issues, and fails to recognise how solid his worlds are. The 'air of reality' needs to be re-emphasised, and one of the possible ways to do it is to look at the close connections between the world of James's time and the world of his novels.[2] Source study, approached in this spirit, is not mere annotation, it is not even exclusively an investigation of the process of creation: it is a means of helping to provide the reader with images and other data to clothe the words; it is a means of reminding him of the extent to which, for all the abstract and abstracting habits of James's critics, the novelist immersed himself in social and material reality. This essay grows out of a particular dissatisfaction with one of the most important studies of James's social milieu: Richard Gill's *Happy Rural Seat: The English Country House and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven, 1972). He provides some information on the country house scene that James knew, but not sufficiently for us to judge with any accuracy James's closeness to or remoteness from it in his fictions, and, disappointingly, the section on *The Spoils of Poynton* is little more than paraphrase and summary. In this article I identify for the first time the background to Poynton and Waterbath and this serves, I think, to sharpen the focus of our view of the novel.

Henry James was given the *donnée* for *The Spoils of Poynton* at a London dinner party of Lady Lindsay's on 23 December 1893. His hostess was the wife of Sir Coutts Lindsay, founder of the Grosvenor Gallery immortalised in

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Patience.[3] As we know from the *Notebooks* he heard the story which provided the germ from 'Mrs. Anstruther-Thompson':

> It appears that the circumstance is about to come out in a process-at-law. Some young laird, in Scotland, inherited, by the death of his father, a large place filled with valuable things – pictures, old china, etc., etc. His mother was still living, and had always lived, in this rich old house, in which she took pride and delight. After the death of her husband she was at first left unmolested there by her son, though there was a small dower-house (an inferior and contracted habitation) attached to the property in another part of the country. But the son married – married promptly and young – and went down with his wife to take possession – possession *exclusive*, of course – according to English custom. On doing so he found that pictures and other treasures were absent – and had been removed by his mother. He enquired, protested, made a row; in answer to which the mother sent demanding still other things, which had formed valuable and interesting features of the house during the years she had spent there. The son and his wife refuse, resist; the mother denounces, and (through litigation or otherwise), there is a hideous public quarrel and scandal. It has ended, my informant told me, in the mother – passionate, rebellious against her fate, resentful of the young wife and of the loss of her dignity and her home – resorting to the tremendous argument (though of no real *value* to her) of declaring that the young man is not the son of his putative father. She has been willing to dishonour herself to put an affront upon *him*. It is all rather sordid and fearfully ugly, but there is surely a story in it. It presents a very fine case of the situation in which, in England, there has *always* seemed to me to be a story – the situation of the mother *deposed*, by the ugly English custom, turned out of the big house on the son's marriage and relegated.[4]

'Mrs. Anstruther-Thompson' was most probably Clementina ('Kit') Anstruther-Thomson, the close friend and collaborator in realms of physiological aesthetics of Vernon Lee – Henry James's 'tiger-cat'.[5] She was not in fact married. It

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is also possible that she was Kit's step-mother, Mrs. John Anstruther-Thomson. The family seat was at Charleton, 5 miles east of Anstruther on the Fifeshire side of the Forth, so that the informant was in a good position to hear Scottish gossip. The Lindsays also had a Fife connection: Sir Coutts Lindsay had been a J.P. and Deputy Lieutenant of the county.

One's immediate question is whether the original case is discoverable, since it seems to offer a classic instance of life being more brutal than art – a situation we often find in James. Looking through reports of cases in Scotland and England I find only one between 1894 and 1900 that is remotely like the anecdote, the case of Ross *versus* Ross.[6] Only a few days after James heard the story, on 15 January 1894, Sir Charles Henry Augustus Frederick Lockhart Ross (1872-1942) brought a case against his mother, Rebecca Sophia (*née* Barnes), for 'payment of legitim, with interest from the date of his father's death'.[7] His father, Sir Charles William Augustus Lockhart Ross of Balnagown Castle (21 miles north-east of Inverness), had died in 1883, leaving the estate in the hands of his widow. The castle, an imposing building on the north side of the Firth of Cromarty, had been associated with the Ross family since the 14th century, and with the Lockhart Rosses since the 18th century. It was remodelled in the 1830s. In no sense does it resemble Poynton. The 'inferior and contracted habitation in another part of the country' was Bonnington House, on the Clyde near Lanark, but I have found no evidence that Dame Rebecca Ross went to live there. It was a handsome Palladian mansion, burnt down, so legend has it, by suffragettes, in 1912. The son had a standard upper-class English education: Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge (where he was a Rowing Blue). Like Owen Gereth, who 'had confessed to eighteen rifles and forty whips',[8] he was thoroughly at home in the gun room, and indeed invented the Canadian Services Rifle. On 26 April 1893 he married Winifred, daughter of Alexander Augustus Berens.[9] This fits with the circumstances James described: 'the son married – married promptly and young', since he only achieved his majority on 4 April 1893. The marriage did not last long: husband and wife brought cases against each other on the grounds of adultery in 1896,

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and in 1897 the marriage was dissolved. As in the novel, the young heir married a girl his mother would regard as a Philistine. The Rosses were landed aristocracy; the Berenses were tradespeople.

The widow had come to regard the castle as her own. In court, speaking for the defence when the case continued in June 1896, Lord Kinnear said: 'It appears in this case that the executrix has been for 13 years in the possession of the entire estate of the deceased, and that she has had every reason to believe it her own, if not from the first, at least for many years. The son has nevertheless the right to make the claim now, and the executrix is bound to have funds to meet it.'[10] Judgement was finally given on 15 July 1896: the widow had to pay legitim at 4%, but was allowed to keep the land she had inherited intact. The question of furniture did not come up in court, but it was a part of the quarrel between Sir Charles and his mother. In information generously provided by Balnagown Castle Properties Ltd. I am told that there was 'a wrangling about furniture, pictures, and heirlooms in the Castle'.[11] There is not the slightest whiff of the threat that the heir would be declared illegitimate by the mother. It could be that the lawyers advised against such a tactic in court. However, the case was no concern of James's, and indeed it was not resolved until his novel was almost finished. For him the salient feature was the severe opposition between mother and son, the fact that they were 'at daggers drawn' over some furniture and a marriage. Further complications for James would merely have represented 'the fatal futility of the Fact'. All the same, it was fact that he needed as a *point de départ*.

There are many points at which Sir Charles seems to resemble Owen Gereth—mainly because in many instances Owen is true to a recognisable type. The real figure and the fictional analogue both moved in that increasingly mobile sporting aristocracy of the late 19th and early 20th centuries: there was no apparent connection between the restlessness of the landed gentry and the stability to which their houses were witness. Owen has a holiday in India; Sir Charles went there, inevitably, on a tiger shoot. But in fact Sir Charles's life was much stranger than anything James would have cared to cook up. He was altogether more picturesque than Owen—who is bland to the point of mystification. It is part of the strength

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of the novel that this should be so, because Sir Charles's later career, ending in Florida, sounds more like an Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh or Osbert Lancaster fantasy. The laird kept up quarrelsome relations with the world to the last. When in 1942 his ashes were carried up the summit of Ben More to be scattered to the winds, the box containing them was found to be perversely fastened with Allen's screws and had to be smashed on the rocks.

Although it is highly likely that the Ross story is the one James heard—albeit embellished with gossip—nothing is proved 'up to the hilt', and we may have to keep our minds open to the possibility of another family and another squabble. There may have been a case that did not come to court, and has left no trace in records. Amongst the landed aristocracy and gentry quarrels over property were not uncommon. We need only turn to *The Times* for December 4th, 5th and 6th 1893 (three weeks before James's dinner party). The case of Hume *v.* Falconer and another concerned Thames Ditton House, the property of W. W. Fitzwilliam Dick (1805-1892). The house is described by W. E. Brayley in *The History of Surrey* (1878) as 'a handsome mansion near the Thames, having in front a fine wooded lawn, extending to the water's edge'. In 1878 Mr. Dick placed the house in trust for his two daughters, but this was revoked in 1888 in favour of their half-brother William Hume (b. 1858). Nevertheless, the daughters, Mrs. Falconer and Mrs. Langrishe, continued to view much of the property as theirs, since it had belonged to their mother (who died in 1877). In 1892, when Hume's father died, the son was an *attaché* in Paris. He sent a caretaker down to the house who could not at first gain entrance, and when at last he did he found that the half-sisters had removed 'all the valuable pictures, sèvres china, and statuary'. A Ruysdael painting said to be worth £2,000 was missing. The plaintiff claimed that 'nearly all the things had been cleared off without the slightest notice to him' and that 'half the house had been dismantled'. Wine had also been stolen. In this case the dispute was settled quickly, and to the apparent satisfaction of the parties. I think James read about this case, since at the end of his *Notebook* entry on 24 December (p. 138) he has a list of 50 names, two closely resembling those in the case: 'Lupus' (close to Lord Justice

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Lopes, trustee, executor and friend of Fitzwilliam Dick, and a witness for the plaintiff); and 'Leresche' (close to Mrs. Langrishe, half-sister of the plaintiff, and a party to the despoilation). It is quite possible that James prompted Mrs. Anstruther-Thomson to tell her story because it had elements he needed to fit an idea for a novel that had been in his head for a month or two. In the Preface to the New York Edition James emphasises the smallness of the germ that grew into *The Spoils*, but, as we have seen, his *Notebook* entry records several other details. He noted them because he did not know at that stage what he might need, if not for this fiction then at least for some other. His mind was certainly running on ideas of property and illegitimacy at this time: the entry in the *Notebooks* immediately preceeding *The Spoils donnée* refers to a story he heard from Henry Adams concerning illegitimacy and inheritance, which he also hoped to make something of.

But why did James not set *The Spoils* in Scotland, the scene of the Ross affair? He could have 'done' Scotland. He visited it first in September 1878, staying in Edinburgh, with Sir John Forbes Clark at Tillypronie near Aberdeen, and with Mrs. Rogerson[12] at Gillesbie in Dumfriesshire. In his letters home, and in two articles for *The Nation*, he was responsive to the 'intensely individual and homogeneous' physiognomy of the country. Wandering over the moors with a personable young Englishman called Sydney Holland[13] he saw that strange and distinct phenomenon of 'Mayfair among the heather'. James returned to Scotland in September 1881, when his impressions were further reinforced. This time he stayed with Lord Rosebery and his Rothschild wife at Dalmeny, with Lady Airlie (*née* Stanley) at the romantic Cortachy, with Sir John Clark at Tillypronie, and with Donald James, 11th Baron Reay, at Laidlawstiel. At Hopetoun he went to the coming-of-age party of John Adrian Louis, 7th Earl (and later 1st Marquess) of Linlithgow: 'handsome, well-mannered, gallant, graceful, with 40,000£ a year and the world at his feet'.[14] He certainly had sufficient material to 'do' the worldly Scottish *grande dame*, since he was an intimate friend of Mrs. Rogerson's mother, Mrs. Duncan Stewart, but she had already appeared as Lady Davenant in 'A London Life'.[15] He knew enough, and he had seen

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enough, but one reason perhaps for avoiding a Scottish setting is that he might have feared that it would be too easy for contemporaries to follow his tracks 'in the heather'.[16]

James was also *positively* drawn to an English setting. A strong part of the 'motive' for *The Spoils* was to celebrate once again the charms of the English country house, to do yet another portrait of it *con amore*. There was an atmospheric, a palpable as opposed to the situational source. In 1881, the same year that he visited those gaunt Scottish castles, James stayed with the American Lady Trevilian at Midelney Place in Somerset.[17] This was a neo-Elizabethan house in Drayton, built in 1861 by J. P. St. Aubyn.[18] 1881 also saw the publication of *The Portrait of a Lady*, so that James's sojourn in the West Country re-emphasised the reality of an experience he had already mastered and evoked in fiction. Often for artists the return to a subject is an especially vivid and memorable experience, and so it was for James. Of Somerset he writes:

> [it] is not especially beautiful; I have seen much better English scenery. But I think I have never been more *penetrated*—I have never more loved the land. It was the old houses that fetched me—Montacute, the admirable; Barrington, that superb Ford [sic] Abbey, and several smaller ones.[19]

This chain of noble houses lodged in James's mind, even as Poynton does in Fleda Vetch's, as a vision. There is a close similarity between James's impression in 1881 and Fleda's on her final journey down to Poynton: James found Montacute 'really, *au fond*, an ineffaceable image: it can be trusted to rise before the eyes in the future';[20] Fleda sees Poynton, in her mind's eye, as a shimmering flash of brightness against 'an air of wild rain' (p. 282). Richard Gill rightly says (pp. 36-7) that this Somerset experience must be regarded as a prime influence behind James's country-house novels, but he does not demonstrate its particular applicability to Poynton. James describes Poynton as 'early Jacobean' (p. 12) and it is 'in the south of England' (p. 11). It is 'eighty minutes' from London by a fast train (p. 281). In 1895 the 9 a.m. from Paddington, for instance, would arrive at Yeovil (the closest main-line station to Montacute) at 1.15 p.m. The station before the stop for Poynton is Chater, which is a West Country

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sounding name—quite similar to East Coker, four miles S.E. of Montacute. 'Poynton' *tout court* is a Cheshire and Shropshire name, but it closely resembles Poyntington, two miles N.E. of Sherborne in Dorset. Poynton is of course an imaginary house: an 'eighty minute' journey on the Great Western in James's time would not have taken Fleda much beyond Faringdon. Any one of the scores of Jacobean houses west of London would do, and there are several good reasons why James placed Poynton close to London, the main one being that he wanted his four spheres of rural action roughly equi-distant from the hub of London. However, there is a good deal to suggest that James was thinking primarily of Montacute since he began the creation of *The Spoils* in Torquay; and when he went down to Devon by train in August 1895 he would have passed very close to Montacute. It is likely that he would have remembered that vivid August fourteen years earlier, and that memories helped him to visualise the fictional scene. This may explain why Fleda's last journey down to Poynton is so powerfully rendered, and why in this novel train journeys and London stations—Liverpool St. (for Ricks), Paddington (for Poynton), Euston (for Maggie's) and Victoria (for Waterbath)—are so important and pregnant with atmosphere. The other Somerset houses James visited in 1881 are earlier, and do not have the assertive high style of Jacobean architecture. Montacute was begun in the 1590s by Edward Phelips, Speaker to the House of Commons, so that it is, more accurately, 'Jacobethan'. James picked on a Jacobean house because this architectural style allows for the eclectic display of heterogeneous spoils which somehow harmonise with each other and the setting: 'It was written in great syllables of colour and form, the tongues of other countries and the hands of rare artists. It was all France and Italy, with their ages composed to rest' (p. 22). The *objets d'art* James saw at Montacute have now been dispersed, but under the aegis of the National Trust there is an even finer collection, and the visitor is mainly struck by the effortless harmony the objects achieve with each other and the house. Montacute certainly helps us to *see* Poynton, but this is not to say that it *is* Poynton. It has a touch of homely provinciality (especially in its interior plasterwork) that would be out of place in Poynton, and unlike Poynton it

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is not an integral whole: the porch on the north front is early 16th century and was moved there from Clifton Maybank in 1787.[21] It is also perhaps a shade too large for Poynton, but surely its radiant magnificence is uncannily close to what many readers imagine. For readers with no concept of a fine early Jacobean house it provides as good an example as any other, and it has the extra merit of having been seen and noted by James.

The name 'Montacute' itself perhaps connects the house with Poynton. The 'old things' strike Fleda, at one instance, as 'wanting in taste and point' (p. 111), and a witty pun is clearly intended: they exist to make a point about taste and morality. Etymologically the two Poyntons in the real world and Poyntington have nothing to do with points, but curiously Montacute *does*, since it derives from *mons acutus* (pointed hill). James was probably given the etymology when he visited the house, but in any case the word breaks down easily into Mont-acute. We may seem to be closer to Joyce's world than James's, but for James proper names established a mystic bond between diurnal reality and the perfected and controlled worlds of art. He castigated Trollope for being too facetious about proper names ('A Mr. Quiverful with fourteen children . . . is too difficult to believe in. We can believe in the name and we can believe in the children; but we cannot manage the combination.'),[22] but it was perhaps the lack of subtlety rather than the principle that offended him. One further fact may well have made James ponder afresh at the complicated interplay between life and art. In May 1896 he escaped from London to finish *The Spoils*. His architect friend Edward Priolau Warren[23] found him a cottage near Rye, belonging to another architect, Reginald Blomfield.[24] His place of work, with its terrace and weeping-ash tree, celebrated so lovingly in the Preface, was called Point Hill.[25] The name Poynton had been chosen by then, but this curious accident doubtless emphasised the resonance of the name, and it may explain why James changed the title from *The Old Things* (which the novel bore when serialised in *The Atlantic Monthly*) to *The Spoils of Poynton*.

Yet another chain of associations connects Montacute with Poynton. James originally intended to call the house Umberleigh.[26] Umber obviously relates to *umbra* and *ombre*

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(shade). James's response to Montacute had been in terms of its 'grey personality . . . its accumulations . . . of tone.'[27] He abandoned the original name 'Umberleigh' when he realised that Poynton had to be presented as a luminous vision. Time and time again it is the radiance that strikes us: 'The shimmer of wrought substances spent itself in the brightness; the old golds and brasses, old ivories and bronzes, the fresh tapestries and deep old damasks threw out a radiance . . .' (p. 61); 'the replenishment of Poynton made a shining steady light' (p. 247). And it strikes Fleda, whose sensitivity to light has doubtless been heightened by her training with the French Impressionist painter. This is appropriate, since the early 17th century 'prodigy houses' were built with big windows not only to produce bright interiors but to announce the prosperity of their owners to the surrounding countryside by night. The high oriels at each end of the long gallery at Montacute are like lanterns perched on some galleon.

Built into the Somerset experience of 1881 was the sense of loss: James would have to leave, but he could hope to retain the image in the mind: 'What becomes of the things one thinks of at these times? They are not lost, we must hope; they drop back into the mind again, and they enrich and embellish it.'[28] This is close to Fleda's experience, but James had a further level of consolation: that *he* could fix the image firmly in art.

I have concentrated on the house, and my impression of the novel has always been dominated by a sense of the building, but what matters, as Fleda realises, is the *toute ensemble*, the relation of thing to setting which is violated when Poynton is despoiled. The original title, *The Old Things*, forces one to concentrate on the objects rather more. They are sketchily drawn; but James conveys the impression of rich, sensuous materials: tapestries, damasks, velvets. Can one trace the source for the things as well as for their setting?

The frontispiece to Volume X of the New York Edition is a Langdon Coburn photograph of some museum pieces in the Wallace Collection. James knew this gallery well, and the objects there gave him a notion of the exquisite, culled from a wide variety of sources.[29] But many other collections must have helped—even the overpowering Rothschild booty at

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Waddesdon—although what Osbert Lancaster labels '*Le Style Rothschild*' seems very different from Mrs. Gereth's highly personal flair. An Oxford oral tradition provides an interesting clue. J. W. Chapman used to assert that the interior of Black Hall on St. Giles in Oxford was, by James's own admission, the model for the interior of Poynton. (It could hardly be a model for the setting of the house, since Poynton is rural, and St. Giles is in the middle of the city). Black Hall is a rather undistinguished late 17th century building. In 1894, when James spent a week or two in Oxford, it was the home of Frederic and Harriette Morrell. He would have had an *entrée* to the house via the already mentioned E. P. Warren, who married the Morrells' daughter Margaret. Mrs. Morrell was a highly cultivated and intelligent woman, friendly with several figures closely associated with the aesthetic movement, notably G. F. Bodley and C. E. Kempe. The catalogue of the sale of her effects after her death in 1924 reflects what James calls 'that most modern of our current passions, the fierce appetite for the upholsterer's and joiner's and brazier's work, the chairs and tables, the cabinets and presses, the material odds and ends, of the more labouring ages'.[30] Black Hall was obviously stuffed full of precious things, and seems to have provided hints for James: the *Times* obituary of 11 November 1924 speaks of it as 'a dwelling of exceptional beauty, the original, some said, but if so it was more than that, of her friend Henry James's "Spoils of Poynton"'. It is unlikely that Mrs. Morrell herself contributed much to the portrait of Mrs. Gereth: the photographs depict her as a portly middle-aged woman,[31] whereas Mrs. Gereth is lithe and sexually attractive still; and although she seems to have been, in her son's words, 'often dissatisfied, often impatient, sometimes intolerant and even unfair'[32] she retained an almost child-like enjoyment of things around her—the latter characteristic does not fit Mrs. Gereth at all. The source of Mrs. Gereth must remain something of a mystery; it is most probable that several women went into her creation, with an addition of sheer inventiveness on James's part. However, one attribute of Mrs. Morrell *is* incorporated into *The Spoils*, not the original edition, but the New York edition. In 1897 we are told, in chapter 13, that Poynton 'had stripped its mistress clean of

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all feeble accomplishments; her hands were imbrued neither with ink nor with water-colour' (p. 157). After the semi-colon James added the following to the New York text, and changed the reference to water-colour: 'she sometimes unrolled, her needles and silks, her gold and silver folded in it, a big, brave, flowery square of ancient unfinished "work"; but her hand had sooner been imbrued with blood than with ink or with water-colour' (p. 148). What has happened, I suspect, is that Mrs. Morrell became increasingly associated with Mrs. Gereth *after* the original composition, so that in revision a tribute to his Oxford friend has been incorporated: she was famed for her needlework, and a typical example of it is an elaborately embroidered book cover in the Bodleian Library.[33]

Mrs. Morrell was to have a connection with the next generation of country-house novels, since her daughter-in-law, Ottoline, appears as Hermione Roddice in Lawrence's *Women in Love*.

Poynton and its contents was evolved from a wide range of elements. Its novelistic creation was in itself an imagined act of collection and combination. Description of it is not laboured, probably because James wished to eschew the prodigal vices of Disraeli, who poured into *Lothair* 'jewels, castles, horses, riches of every kind . . . without measure, without mercy.'[34] Economy in *The Spoils* should not however be mistaken for impalpability.

If Poynton is the house beautiful, Waterbath is the house ugly. It characterizes the Brigstocks even before we meet them. We are on firm ground in finding a source for Waterbath, since James himself gives it away. He writes in the *Notebooks*, after outlining the Scottish story:

> One can imagine the rebellion, in this case . . . of a particular sort of proud woman—a woman who had *loved* her home, her husband's home and hers (with a knowledge and adoration of artistic beauty, the tastes, the habits of a collector). There would be the particular type and taste of the wife the son would have chosen—a wife out of a Philistine, a tasteless, a hideous house; the kind of house the very walls and furniture of which constitute a kind of *anguish* for such a woman as I suppose the mother to be. That kind

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> of anguish occurred to me, precisely, as a subject, during the 2 days I spent at Fox Warren (I didn't mean to write the name), a month or so ago. I thought of the strange, the terrible experience of a nature with a love and passion for beauty, united by adverse circumstances to such a family and domiciled in such a house. I imagine the young wife coming, precisely, out of it (p. 137).

It is not clear from this entry whether James at that point had yet located the 'anguish' in a mother-in-law figure such as Mrs. Gereth, or in a younger person marrying into the family, but by the time he came to make the Notebook entry he had the general configuration fixed in his mind.

Where was Fox Warren? Who was the family? The answers are not at all difficult to find, although no critic has bothered to do so. Mark Girouard's *The Victorian Country House* (1971) tells us that the house is just west of Cobham, Surrey (p. 180). It was, in 1893, the home of Mrs. Buxton. It had been designed and built in a neo-Elizabethan style in 1856 by her late husband Charles Buxton (1823-1871), with the co-operation of the architect Frederick Barnes. A vivid view from the north west is to be found in Buxton's posthumously published *Notes of Thought* (1873), edited by J. Llewellyn Davies (p. 35); this work also contains a detailed biographical sketch of the author. Buxton hailed from the great circle of Norfolk Quaker families—the Gurneys, the Hoares, the Barclays and the Buxtons. It was a prosperous clan, but also concerned with philanthropy, social progress and improvement. Charles Buxton's father, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, was a prominent participator in the Anti-Slavery Movement. In fact the Buxtons were a household name—as we see in chapter 28 of *David Copperfield*:

> 'I will not conceal from you, my dear Mr. Copperfield,' said Mrs. Micawber, 'that *I* have long felt the Brewing business to be particularly adapted to Mr. Micawber. Look at Barclay and Perkins! Look at Truman, Hanbury and Buxton!'

Charles Buxton was an M.P., very independent in his political views, and he has been taken to be one of the originals for Plantagenet Palliser. He was a man of

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paradoxes: a brewer and a writer of temperance articles; a keen fox-hunter and a passionate conservationist. His friend Trollope tells us in his *Autobiography* that the incident in *The Eustace Diamonds* where Frank Greystock goes out hunting on a horse inadvertently purloined from a train happened to Charles Buxton[35]—so that, by coincidence, Buxton is connected to the two major Victorian novels about squabbles over inherited articles. He married Emily Mary, daughter of the Queen's physician, Sir Henry Holland. Arnold, who lived for the last 15 years of his life only a stone's throw from Fox Warren and was a frequent visitor there, would perhaps have identified the Buxtons as Philistines aspiring to the condition of Barbarians.

Fox Warren *is* ugly, and even the 20th century rehabilitation of Victoriana has not quite reconciled us to it. Girouard describes it as 'in unpleasantly hot red brick and terra cotta, with crow-stepped gables, diapered and moulded brickwork and no stone used' (p. 180). Ian Nairn regards it as 'big and violent', and of the 'nightmare Model Farm' nearby he writes: 'The sinister and neurotic atmosphere comes off all too successfully—usually these Victorian excesses are just a joke—and rivals Soane at his most eerie. The emotional and intellectual level is nowhere near Soane, however'.[36] He sums it up as 'Struwelpeter' architecture.[37] Fox Warren was one of those brash monuments of opulence and insensitivity that the Victorians dotted round the country-side; but this particular house, whatever its faults, was not one of the routine living-machines of the Philistine. There was thought behind it, and laudable experimentation, and it is necessary to distinguish between it and Waterbath, close as it is to its fictional counterpart. In *Notes of Thought* (which Trollope reviewed approvingly for the *Fortnightly Review* in March 1873), Buxton defends the use of brick and attacks stucco: 'who in the world could care one blessed fig for a big square box plastered over? . . . What architects dreadfully want is dash and force. But they can never get that by copying' (pp. 250-1). His views are close to Butterfield's and Ruskin's, especially when he espouses the principles of colour and organicism:

> The one essential thing for architects to study at this day is how to enrich their buildings . . . with *colour* . . .

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> Anything in the world were better than the hateful dingy white, or dirty brown, of the uncared-for wall (pp. 221-2). The fact that in all animal (and in all vegetable?) life there is no such thing as a perfectly straight line—that all lines are in curves—is one of the most curious and interesting that the microscope has brought out. And now cannot it be applied in architecture (p. 110)?

He hated sham; he hated leaded-lights in imitation Gothic, both as a progressive and as a lover of nature:

> For my part, I think any country-house most incomplete unless you can sit in the drawing-room or in your bed-room and read your book, with the garden and wood breathing round you all the while (p. 178).

This conflicts with Mrs. Gereth's very definite views about windows: 'she hated such windows, the one flat glass, sliding up and down' (p. 56). Fox Warren, like Waterbath, is 'commodious' and a serpentine mass of waterpipes crawling across the facade testifies to inner cleanliness, but somehow at Poynton the question of modern conveniences never comes up—unless introduced by an unfeeling outsider such as Mrs. Brigstock, who brings a magazine containing details of 'greasecatchers', as antimacassers were then called. (Appropriately when Lord Curzon rented Montacute he thought it proper to hide the bath in a neo-Jacobean wardrobe). Fox Warren caught James on a raw nerve; we know from his adverse response to the Law Courts that he did not like 'priggish' 'Butterfieldian' architecture.[38]

Much as James hated Fox Warren he retains in the novelistic portrait the truth that its surroundings were beautiful: Mrs. Gereth 'remembered to have heard the place described as possessing those advantages that are usually spoken of as natural' (p. 2). One of the most striking features of Fox Warren is the magnificent view from its terrace across to the North Downs. The ground falls away steeply (the Jamesian visitor seeing in his mind's eye Owen and Mona 'in the act of scrambling and helping each other' (p. 7)), and a series of brick staircases leads down into tightly enclosed areas with 'natural' pools, cascades and narrow paths winding through densely packed laurel and rhododendron. It

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is the Victorian exotic garden *par excellence*. Unlike 18th century landscape gardens the surrounding countryside is not integrated into the scheme, and it is not surprising to learn that Robin Hood films and horror movies were made here in the 1950s. A visit to Fox Warren sharpens the sense of what it was that Mrs. Gereth criticised at Waterbath:

> Once in the grounds, she recognised that, with a site, a view that struck the note, set an example to its inmates, Waterbath ought to have been charming. How she herself, with such elements to handle, would have taken the fine hint of nature (p. 2)!

She doubtless would not have made a claustrophobic garden or indulged in modish exotica. In her mind's eye she rearranges everywhere she goes, and when she decrees a horticultural revolution at Ricks (p. 86) we surely catch an echo of *Kubla Khan*. The gardens at Poynton at not described, but one suspects that near the house they are formal: 'outside, on the low terraces, she contradicted gardeners and refined on nature' (p. 22). Victorian gardeners had a century and a half of landscape gardening behind them, but in the 1890s there was a return, amongst *cognoscenti*, to the formal garden, one of the most ardent polemicists on its behalf being the owner of the cottage in which *The Spoils* was finished: Reginald Blomfield. He urged the uprooting of the vices of the Victorian garden in *The Formal Garden in England* (1892). At Poynton Mrs. Gereth is probably operating in this revived tradition, which is closely connected to the Aesthetic Movement. The formal garden did not have to be claustrophobic: at its best it could form a logical transition from house to natural countryside – as the formal gardens do so splendidly at Montacute. At Barrington, where the formal gardens have been destroyed, the Elizabethan house rises slightly absurdly from rude fields, but at Montacute the magnificent English landscape is tantalisingly visible beyond the stone screens. Something like this is captured in the initial description of Poynton: 'For England you looked out of old windows—it was England that was the wide embrace' (p. 22). There is a psychic geography of England, and native readers tend to divine that there is a difference between the sandy landscape, scots pine and gorse that one reaches from Victoria and the

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nobler more truly English landscapes beyond Paddington. The source study confirms that considerations such as these were in James's mind as he composed.

In the *Notebooks* entry for *The Spoils* it should be remembered that James not only castigated the house but its inhabitants: 'I thought of the strange, the terrible experience of a nature with a love and passion for beauty, united by adverse circumstances to such a family and domiciled in such a house'. Whatever charms and individualistic saliencies Charles Buxton may have had it seems likely that his wife and daughters were more like the average British middle-class female: bouncy, wholesome, conventional, self-satisfied, a little spoilt. There is every likelihood that Mrs. Buxton was a model for Mrs. Brigstock. James's sister knew Mrs. Buxton, and records that in a conversation with her she encountered 'one of those dark places of the human mind into which light never enters', so 'struggled no more'.[39] Henry probably had an experience similar to Alice's. It may be that amongst the three Buxton daughters there is a model for Mona. Mary married Albert Rutson of the Manor House, Byfleet, in 1887. This house, about one mile from Fox Warren, was a hunting lodge given by James I to Queen Anne, remodelled in 1686. It has very tasteful asymmetrical wings added by Henry James's architect friend Edward Warren in 1905. Ian Nairn describes it as 'one of the most attractive late 17th century houses in the country'.[40] So that Fox Warren, like Waterbath, *did* ally itself by marriage to an earlier and more stylish tradition. As it happens, James had met Albert Rutson years before, in 1869, and he may possibly have been thinking of him as he was creating Owen, since Owen's name was originally to have been Albert.[41] However, it is not possible to pin down a specific source for Owen, since James must have met scores of young men like him—including Sydney Holland, Emily Buxton's nephew.

Included in the Buxton family circle was the most important of James's friends from the later period: his literary executor Percy Lubbock, whose mother was a Gurney; Charles Buxton's son Sydney also married into the Lubbock family. The Buxton ancestors hailed from Earlham in Norfolk, and when in *Earlham* (1922) Lubbock came to celebrate his own ancestral roots it was in terms of a house

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more than people, and in accents derived from high aesthetic works such as *The Spoils* and Pater's *The Child in the House*.

True Jamesians feel they can never know enough about the Master, but his own fables of novelists and artists carry sufficient warnings of the dangers of this kind of source study. Nevertheless, it provides a certain palpability to bring to the reading. James himself was attracted to this kind of source-study: he hunted for backgrounds to *David Copperfield* in Great Yarmouth; he warmed to *Denis Duval* because it was set in Rye and Winchelsea; and when in Tours he looked for the house described in Balzac's *Le Curé de Tours*. He found that often in this kind of literary tourism 'you cannot quite put your hand' upon what you are looking for, since the reality 'does not fulfil all the conditions'.[42] But sometimes what one finds 'fulfils conditions enough'. Balnagown Castle, the disputed Scottish property, is not going to help us to see anything in *The Spoils*, although the life of the litigous Laird provides an impression of actuality against which to compare James. But Montacute and Fox Warren *do* help, because they are the palpable constituents from which his imaginary universe was constructed. The recognition that James was living in and writing about a visible world that existed is a contribution made by research which criticism ought not to neglect. Of course we go beyond the specific elements from which James's fictional scene was created, just as in reading Hardy we go beyond those stupid pedestrian readers who persist in thinking that Dorchester *is* Casterbridge. But as a start, the brash red brickwork and staring plate-glass of Fox Warren and the stone touched by the tone of time and the graceful mullions of Montacute certainly 'fulfil conditions enough' and give us windows into the novel.

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NOTES

[1]'The Art of the Novel', in *The House of Fiction*, ed. L. Edel (1957), p. 33.

[2]A recent study pursuing this line is *The Air of Reality: New Essays on Henry James*, ed. John Goode (1972).

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[3]Caroline Blanche Elizabeth Fitzroy married Sir Coutts Lindsay in 1861. By the 1890s they were separated, and she lived at Hans Place, London. James met the Lindsays at one of Whistler's breakfasts in Chelsea in the winter of 1878-9.

[4]*The Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. F. O. Matthiessen and K. B. Murdock (New York, 1961), pp. 136-7.

[5]For fuller details of C. Anstruther-Thomson see her posthumously published essays *Art and Man*, ed. Vernon Lee (1924). This includes a Sargent drawing of her dressed in the aesthetic costume 'of one of the ladies in Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love*'.

[6]See *The Scottish Law Reporter*, XXXIII (1896-7), 607-9; 765-8.

[7]'Legitim' is a peculiar institution of Scottish Law, whereby an offspring or a remoter issue has the right to a share in a deceased parent's moveable property. If there is a surviving spouse, the child's claim is to one third of the net moveable estate. The heir may 'elect' to receive his legacy and give up trust property, or he may decide to take the trust property and give up the legacy. This case is interesting (and does in fact appear as a footnote in D. M. Walker's *Principles of Scottish Private Law* (Oxford, 1970) II, 1798), because the son was a minor at the time of his father's death and therefore could not elect. The case would have provided even a Trollope with too many legal complexities had it been given full treatment.

[8]*The Spoils of Poynton* (1897), p. 62. All subsequent citations are to this edition.

[9]Winifred's grand-father, Otto Alexander Berens (d. 1860), was said to have originated the fancy trade (see Frederic Boase, *Modern English Biography* . . . [1892.1901], I, 250). Curiously, by the marriage of Winifred's sister Olivia Elizabeth to Major Sloane-Stanley, in 1899, James became connected to this family, via his relation Lady Rose. He almost certainly remained unaware of the fact.

[10]*The Scottish Law Reporter, op. cit.* p. 609.

[11]A photograph of Balnagown Castle of circa 1908 is in H. Pumpelly Read, *Rossiana* (Albany, New York, 1908).

[12]Mrs. Rogerson was the daughter of Mrs. Duncan Stewart. In 1886 she was in the limelight of the scandalous Charles Dilke case; James wrote of the speculation rife as to whether

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Dilke would marry her or Mark Pattison's widow (L. Edel, *The Middle Years* (1963), p. 106).

[13]See below p. 318. Sydney Holland (1855-1931) became Second Viscount Knutsford on the death of his father in 1914.

[14]*Notebooks*, p. 36.

[15]For a full account of Mrs. Duncan Stewart see Augustus Hare, *Good Words* (Oct. and Nov. 1892), 661-6; 764-71. (This article is perhaps referred to in the Preface to 'The Altar of the Dead'.) For evidence that she is the original of Lady Davenant see *Notebooks*, p. 78. 'A London Life' (1888) is the first expression of an intensified cynicism James felt about life in English High Society.

[16]*Notes on Novelists* (1914), p. 4.

[17]Lady Trevilian was the New Yorker Kate Sedley Fearing, whom James may have known in Newport in the early 60s. Her first husband was Alexander Carter (1834-1878), of 'The Spring', Kenilworth. 'In Warwickshire' records James's visit to his house in 1877 (*Portraits of Places*, 1883). Edel suggests, with same plausibility, that Carter is the original of the enlightened Lord Canterville in 'Lady Barbarina'. In 1880 she married Edwin Brooke Cely Trevilian (1833-1914). She died in 1930. James saw something of her wayward sister in Rome in 1869, and it is my belief that she is one of the models for Christina Light.

[18]J. P. St. Aubyn (1815-1895) is best known for his remodelling of St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall. See *The Builder* (14 November 1868) for a contemporary depiction of Midelney Place. I am grateful to Major Richard Cely Trevilian for information provided.

[19]*Notebooks*, p. 34.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 35.

[21]James had known this porch as a child, since it is depicted in Nash's *Mansions of England in the Olden Time*.

[22]*The House of Fiction*, *ed. cit.* p. 103.

[23]For a full account of James's warm friendship with E. P. Warren (1856-1937) and his wife Margaret see John Russell, 'Henry James and his Architect', *Architectural Review*, XCIII (March, 1943), 69-72.

[24]Reginald Blomfield (1856-1942) was the nephew of Hardy's employer Arthur Blomfield. He was closely associated with

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figures in the Aesthetic Movement such as William Morris, Norman Shaw and W. R. Lethaby. Like E. P. Warren he advocated the revival of Renaissance styles.

[25]There is a photograph of Point Hill (much enlarged in 1912) in Blomfield's *Memoirs of an Architect* (1932), opposite p. 91. The terrace and the weeping ash are clearly visible.

[26]*Notebooks*, p. 199.

[27]*Notebooks*, pp. 34-5.

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 34.

[29]See *The Painter's Eye*, ed. J. L. Sweeney (1956), pp. 67-78.

[30]*The Art of the Novel*, ed. R. P. Blackmur (New York, 1947), p. 123.

[31]See *Ottoline: The Early Memoirs of Lady Ottoline Morrell*, ed. Robert Gathorne-Hardy (1963), opposite p. 132.

[32]Harriette Morrell, *A description by herself of some of her needlework . . .*, ed. P. Morrell (Oxford, 1925), p. 6.

[33]Arch. AA e. 65. The Bodleian also acquired some of the books and pictures from the Black Hall sale.

[34]*Literary Reviews and Essays*, ed. A. Mordell (1957), p. 307.

[35]Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (Edinburgh, 1883), I, 85-6.

[36]I. Nairn and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Surrey* (2nd ed., 1971), p. 246. Plate 71 illustrates the Model Farm (1854), almost certainly designed by Buxton and Barnes. I am grateful to the owners of the house, Mr. and Mrs. Willment, for showing it to me, and providing useful information.

[37]*Ibid.*, p. 67.

[38]*Notebooks*, p. 328.

[39]*The Diary of Alice James*, ed. L. Edel (1965), p. 112.

[40]Nairn, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

[41]James recalls 'kind, slim, celibate, informing and informed' Rutson in *The Middle Years* (1917), p. 17. He was at that time Lord Aberdare's private secretary.

[42]*A Little Tour in France* (1924), p. 17.

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Rossetti's Pornography

NICHOLAS SHRIMPTON

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI wrote nothing which can by any customary definition be called pornographic. He produced nothing to equal Swinburne's verse-encyclopaedia of flagellation *The Flogging Block*, nor did he respond in kind to the obscene squibs with which Swinburne enlivened their private correspondence. Rossetti was not verbally timorous or demure, as the discreet editorial gaps in the 1911 edition of his works indicate. Indeed, in 1871, his frankness caused Robert Buchanan to attack him as the leader of 'The Fleshly School of Poetry'. But the charge seemed extravagant to many people even then, and it would be hard to be shocked by 'Nuptial Sleep', the poem singled out by Buchanan for its licentious nastiness, today. Even if, as biographical evidence suggests we should, we tacitly substitute 'Adulterous' for the diplomatic 'Nuptial' of Rossetti's title, this elegant description of post-coital glow can hardly deprave or corrupt.

However, my choice of the word 'pornography' is not perverse. In the original and most strictly etymological sense of the word, that of 'writing about prostitutes', Rossetti is a pornographer of distinction. Oswald Doughty's biography of the poet has a special footnote listing 'works in which the prostitute or similar theme appears' (*A Victorian Romantic*, 1949, p. 682) and his tally amounts to eleven poems, eight paintings and two pieces of prose. Though this list could probably be expanded, what is most interesting is that it already contains Rossetti's best short poem, 'Jenny', and that this is a work in which our sense of subject is crucial.

Critical accounts of 'Jenny' have hitherto fallen into two groups: the improper and the sentimental. Both types of response arise from the poem's content, its pornography, and each in turn involves a decision about the poem's form. The improper school springs from a feeling that a night in a prostitute's room is a morally deplorable experience, and from a consequent wish to insist that the poem is in no way confessional. Rossetti himself was certainly aware that his subject was shocking and that he would need to defend

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himself. Part of his reply to Buchanan's attack was an astutely exculpatory account of the poem's literary method:

> Neither some thirteen years ago, when I wrote this poem, nor last year when I published it, did I fail to foresee impending charges of recklessness and aggressiveness, or to perceive that even some among those who could really *read* the poem and acquit me on these grounds, might still hold that the thought in it had better have dispensed with the situation which serves it for a framework. Nor did I omit to consider how far a treatment from without might here be possible. But the motive powers of art reverse the requirement of science, and demand first of all an *inner* standing-point. The heart of such a mystery as this must be plucked from the very world in which it beats or bleeds; and the beauty and pity, the self-questionings and all-questionings which it brings with it, can come with full force only from the mouth of one alive to its whole appeal, such as the speaker put forward in the poem, – that is, of a young and thoughtful man of the world. To such a speaker, many half-cynical revulsions of feeling and reverie, and a recurrent presence of the impression of beauty (however artificial) which first brought him within such a circle of influence, would be inevitable features of the dramatic relations portrayed. (*Athenaeum*, 16 Dec., 1871, p. 793)

The relations are 'dramatic', the 'I' of the poem is a 'speaker' further characterized, and therefore fictionalized, as 'a young and thoughtful man of the world'. The coast was thereafter clear for critics to interpret the poem as dramatic monologue.

William Michael Rossetti, who shared his brother's concern for the family reputation, supplied the phrase, only slightly qualified, in the notes to his posthumous edition of the poems:

> This much-discussed poem was begun at an extremely youthful age—may even have been before the end of 1847, or in Rossetti's twentieth year. The portion then written was short, and was merely in the nature of general reflection—not (as now) of semi-dramatic monologue. The composition was finished towards 1858, but again revised late in 1869.
>
> (*Works*, 1911, p. 36)

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Later and more disinterested critics have continued the tradition. R. G. Howarth repeats William Michael Rossetti's phrase 'semi-dramatic monologue' and points to the publication of Browning's *Men and Women* in 1855 as a possible influence upon the choice of such a form. Ronnalie Roper Howard echoes Howarth and states that the poet 'has learned from the dramatic monologue'. Graham Hough abandoned William Michael's qualifying 'semi', as does Lionel Stevenson who declares that 'Jenny' and 'A Last Confession' are 'the first significant' dramatic monologues 'written by any other poet than the two originators' Tennyson and Browning.[1]

The objection to this approach to the poem is not that we now know Dante Gabriel Rossetti to have been rather better qualified to write autobiographical poems about visits to prostitutes than he wished his original readers to realise. Though he himself explained his revision of the 1847 version on the grounds that it described 'a world I was then happy enough to be a stranger to'[2] the poem is obviously not a versified diary entry. The real trouble is that if 'Jenny' is a dramatic monologue it is not a very good one. It fails conspicuously to display that tension between sympathy and judgement which Robert Langbaum identifies as the source of the form's power. 'Jenny' provokes sympathy rather than judgement because its speaker is simply too nice. He may accompany a prostitute to her room and spend a reflective night there, but he leaves with his lust unslaked, pausing only to perform an act of charity. We are not taken inside a reprehensible state of mind, not required to sympathise with actions which our conscious minds simultaneously condemn.

For the alternative body of thought about the poem the interest of prostitution is less moral than sociological. For these critics it is not the speaker of the poem but the institution which he encounters which demands judgement. They look for accurate reporting, constructive analysis of a social problem. Feeling no need to see the poem as a dramatic monologue, they understand it instead as a piece of narrative social realism which may conveniently be associated with the Pre-Raphaelite interest of the early 1850s in modern subject matter. Ford Madox Brown's painting *Work* or, more closely parallel still, Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* become appropriate comparisons. Having once identified

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'Jenny' as social realism, however, these critics find it wanting. As an account of a social problem Rossetti's treatment of prostitution is said to be sentimental. Oswald Doughty, comparing the poem with Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* and with the principle of the 'modern' picture, added the judgement that 'Rossetti's treatment of "Jenny", another unblessed damozel, is however weakened by an unconvincingly pious sensuality and by the conventional sentimentality of the period in any literary or pictorial reference to prostitution'. John Dixon Hunt, contrasting Rossetti's use of contemporary subjects and settings with 'the realism of the nineties', finds in 'Jenny' a 'mawkish manner' and a 'sometimes evasive sentimentality'.[3]

What Doughty calls 'pious sensuality' is presumably that fatal niceness which also saps the poem as a dramatic monologue, the speaker's sexual abstinence. The 'conventional sentimentality of the period' about prostitution, however, is a more difficult matter. There was, of course, a conventional literary inhibition about prostitution at this date, and Thackeray denounced it in Chapter 49 of *Vanity Fair*. But inhibition is not sentimentality. Rossetti's 'conventional sentimentality' consists, I suppose, of the fact that Jenny, though neither pious nor intellectual, is young, charming, and healthy. She is not a 'dirty, intoxicated slattern, in tawdry finery and an inch thick paint'—to quote from the work of the leading authority on prostitution in the England of the 1860s, Dr. William Acton. But that is not his description of the historical reality. It is his account of the conventional and melodramatic image of the prostitute which his observations contradict.

Acton's *Prostitution, Considered in its Moral, Social and Sanitary Aspects, in London and Other Large Cities: with Proposals for the Mitigation and Prevention of its Attendant Evils* was published in 1857 and reissued in revised form in 1870 (the same year as Rossetti's *Poems*). After a medical training at Barts, its author had spent five years in France studying under the leading genito-urinary surgeon Philippe Ricord and working at the Female Venereal Hospital in Paris. On this experience is based not only his expertise as a venereologist but also his impressive knowledge of prostitution on the continent. Many years of medical practice and

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social enquiry in London then followed. Nobody, faced with this book's grim statistical tables of ulcerations, suppurating buboes, indurated chancres, eruptions, swellings, sores and chronic discharges, could accuse it of sentimentality. And yet Acton's central purpose is to debunk the lurid popular image of the prostitute. There has been built up, he declares, 'a sort of "bogie" in a corner cupboard', a fictitious idea which has become more and more firmly rooted:

> . . . an overshadowing article of almost religious belief, the notion that the career of the woman who once quits the pinnacle of virtue involves the very swift decline and ultimate total loss of health, modesty, and temporal prosperity. And herein are contained three vulgar errors:-
>
> 1. That once a harlot, always a harlot.
> 2. That there is no possible advance, moral or physical, in the condition of the actual prostitute.
> 3. That the harlot's progress is short and rapid.
>
> And the sooner fearless common sense has cleared the ground of fallacy, the sooner may statesmen see their way to handle a question of which they have not denied the importance.[4] (p. 27)

Acton proceeds immediately to replace the fallacy with a more modern and accurate picture:

> The Gorgon of the present day against whom we should arm our children should be a woman who, whether sound or diseased, is generally pretty and elegant—oftener painted by Nature than by art—whose predecessors cast away the custom of drunkenness when the gentlemen of England did the same. . . . (p. 28)

If that begins to sound surprisingly like Rossetti's Jenny, the impression is only strengthened as Acton demonstrates how various prostitution is. 'The shades of London prostitution', he argues, 'are as numberless as those of society at large' and the microcosm 'exhibits, like its archetype, saving one, all the virtues and good qualities, as well as all the vices, weaknesses, and follies' (p. 28).

If the popular image of the prostitute is over-simplified the popular conception of her career is still more mistaken. The picture of 'inevitable decline and degeneration among sordid

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surroundings'[5] which John Dixon Hunt desiderates is a myth. Prostitutes do not characteristically die of syphilis, or of any other venereal disease. Acton tabulates the deaths in London from all venereal diseases over a period of three years. The total for women aged over fifteen is just 73—in a city of three million people in which there were, according to the Metropolitan Police Return of May 1857, at least 8,600 recognised prostitutes. Venereal disease may have been common but to die from it was extremely unusual. In Acton's words, 'the downward progress and death of the prostitute in the absolute ranks of that occupation are exceptional . . . she succumbs at last, not to that calling, nor to venereal disease, but in due time, and to the various maladies common to respectable humanity' (p. 33). In fact, prostitutes at the age of thirty-five are actually healthier than their child-bearing or labouring contemporaries. Acton allows himself a satirically purple passage of comment on these facts:

> How then is the disparition of this class of women to be accounted for, as they are neither stricken down in the practice of harlotry, nor by their own hands, nor by intemperance and venereal disease, nor would seem to perish of supervening evils in any notable proportion? Do they fall by the wayside, as some assume, like leaves of autumn, unnoticed and unnumbered, to be heaped up and to rot? Do unknown graves conceal, not keeping green the lost one's memory, and the obscure fallible records of the pauper burials at last confound all clue and chance of tracing her? Is she filtered again into the world through a reformatory? or does she crawl from the sight of men and the haunts of her fellows to some old homely spot in time to linger and to die?
>
> I have every reason to believe, that by far the larger number of women who have resorted to prostitution for a livelihood, return sooner or later to a more or less regular course of life. (p. 39)

In other words they normally marry, often 'exceedingly well' (p. 49) in the words of one witness before the Select Committee on Contagious Diseases, and become respectable wives and mothers. Acton sums the whole matter up in a memorable sentence at the end of his second chapter:

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> I repeat that prostitution is a transitory state, through which an untold number of British women are ever on their passage. (p. 49)

Jenny's wholesome normality does not represent a sentimental idealisation of her class.

Indeed in 1869 and 1870, the years in which Rossetti was revising and publishing his poem, it was precisely the common humanity of the whore which social reformers were stressing. Opponents of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and of the system of legalised prostitution which they had introduced, realised that as long as the prostitute was thought of as a monster legal discrimination against her would continue. The whore had to be seen as a human being before she could regain her human rights. Josephine Butler, the most forthright and formidable campaigner for the prostitute in Victorian England, and an old acquaintance of Rossetti (her husband had helped him with the translations for *The Early Italian Poets*), invited an audience in May 1870 to come to terms with the fact that prostitutes were 'altogether human beings like ourselves, with hearts and consciences, sorrows and joys, tender hopes and poignant regrets'.[6] Seen in this context the 'conventional sentimentality' of Rossetti's poem becomes a matter of some doubt.

But although its account of the problem of prostitution is less flawed than has hitherto been supposed, 'Jenny' is in fact no more social realism than it is dramatic monologue. The tyranny of subject has coerced us into believing that a poem about prostitution must have as its purpose either moral exploration (hence dramatic monologue) or sociological concern (hence social realism). Rossetti's pornography is far more flexible. 'Jenny' is another kind of poem entirely. Though the conspicuously Victorian quality of both dramatic monologue and social realism has made the habitual attribution of this Victorian poem to one or the other of them all the easier, its formal roots actually lie outside its own period. Properly read, this poem is a late—perhaps the last—flowering of a great Romantic genre.

The idea that Rossetti is in some generalized way a latter-day Romantic is conventional enough, but when it comes to the question of resemblance in detail the references become

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more sparse. A. C. Benson summed the matter up remarkably well in 1904. Rossetti was at no time interested in Wordsworth whom he found pedestrian and moralistic. Scott, Byron and Shelley were all the subjects of intense youthful enthusiasms subsequently outgrown.

> There remain the names of Coleridge and Keats, to whom in spiritual ancestry Rossetti was the nearest. In Coleridge he saw a genius overpowered by indolence and vapid philosophy; but the *Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* had no doubt a directly inspiring effect upon Rossetti's mode of conception and execution. . . . To Keats Rossetti owed a true allegiance: there is the same richness of fancy, the same voluptuousness of mood, the same deliberate intention of wringing beauty out of the moment and the scene. (*Rossetti*, 1904, p. 120)

Since Benson attention has been focused on this 'true allegiance' but although the iambic tetrameter couplets of 'Jenny' may be a technical echo of one of Rossetti's favourite Keats poems, 'The Eve of St Mark', neither the topic nor its treatment seems particularly Keatsian. G. H. Ford sets 'Jenny' apart from the rest of Rossetti's work, calling it a 'curious *tour de force*' on 'social questions' and attributing its origins to the influence of Browning's dramatic monologues (*Keats and the Victorians*, 1944, p. 112 and p. 117).

Yet the other authenticated Romantic influence upon Rossetti's poetry, Coleridge, seems at first sight scarcely more helpful. Those 'parts of Coleridge' with which Ford declares Rossetti to have something in common are the same parts to which Benson drew attention, 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel'. The latter, like 'The Eve of St Mark', is written in iambic tetrameter couplets and may thus have influenced the technical format of Rossetti's poem. In all other respects, however, 'Jenny' once again seems almost impossibly remote.

But was Rossetti's early, persistent and well-documented admiration for Coleridge strictly confined to the more exotic parts of his verse? He observed in a notebook entry of 1866 that, 'The sense of the *momentous* is strongest in Coleridge; not the weird and ominous only, but the value of monumental

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moments'.[7] There is nothing to suggest which poems Rossetti had in mind, but we can get a hint from the sonnet which he wrote on Coleridge some fourteen years later. Here the imagery suggests not only the prison of 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' but also, and even more strongly, the central section of 'Frost at Midnight'. It is natural that for a biographical sonnet Rossetti should turn to a poem more obviously personal than 'Christabel' or 'The Ancient Mariner', but he knows the poem so well that he actually runs together two quite different parts of it. Rossetti's line 'Heaven lost through spider-trammelled prison-bars' is a combination of the bars through which Coleridge gazes, as a schoolboy, at the fire, with his subsequent, and separate, declaration:

> For I was reared
> In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
> And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
> (lines 51-53)

The cradle imagery of Rossetti's octet is further confirmation of how profoundly 'Frost at Midnight' underlies this poem of tribute. 'In the long run', William Michael Rossetti wrote in his edition of his brother's work, 'he perhaps enjoyed and revered Coleridge beyond any other modern poet whatsoever' (p. xv). Such a reverence was likely to extend beyond 'Christabel' and 'The Ancient Mariner' to 'Frost at Midnight'. If it did, then the formal problem of 'Jenny' is solved. 'Jenny', properly understood, is an example of that rare and remarkable poetic form the Coleridgean conversation poem. A recognition that this is the case radically changes our critical demands upon the poem. A. R. Jones, writing about the original inventor of the genre, pointed out that 'In his aptly named conversational poems the subject is unashamedly Coleridge'.[8] The same is true of Rossetti's conversation poem.

The definition of the conversation poem—even as written by Coleridge—is a matter of some difficulty. He himself used the phrase only once, as a subtitle to 'The Nightingale', and actually published most of the poems which we now categorize in this way under the more conventional heading 'Meditative Poems in Blank Verse'. We owe our modern

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sense that they constitute a distinct genre to an influential article published in 1925 by George McLean Harper, and the question of which poems may be admitted to the canon has remained a matter of dispute. Clearly conversation poems are not conversations in the literal sense that more than one speaker is involved. They are monologues which differ from soliloquy or conventional meditation in their tone and manner. Though this is partly a question of style, of the verbal procedures of conversation, it is not only that. In normal meditative verse we expect a steady progression of argument towards a point by which the author will stand. The conversational treatment of ideas, however, can be both spasmodic and inconsequential. This quality is the source in these poems of what Humphry House, talking of 'Frost at Midnight', calls 'a quite extraordinary sense of the mind's *very being*' (*Coleridge*, 1953, p. 81). It is also the source of the poet's 'return' upon himself, that recoil from extravagant speculation to the real and particular (and outwardly trivial) which is so characteristic a part of their structure. In 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison', for example, Coleridge moves from 'such hues / As veil the Almighty Spirit' to a walnut tree and a rook. We are offered not the planned argument of a lecture, not even the purposefully directed discussion of Socratic dialogue. Instead we are given, by conversation, a format in which the mind can play with unusual freedom upon ideas, with no prior commitment to either lucid process or achieved significance.

The development of the form by Coleridge displays a remarkable search for situations in which the conversational partner, necessary for our apprehension of the precise kind of thought which we are being offered, can plausibly be present without actually speaking. In 'The Eolian Harp', much the earliest of the conversation poems, Sara's silence is sustained only with difficulty. She is 'pensive' and 'reclin'd' on Coleridge's arm, and may therefore be close to sleep. None the less she does intervene, though only in reported speech, to check her husband's doctrinal improprieties. Two years later, in 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison', Coleridge has the matter more firmly under control. Here we are offered the imaginery conversation with absent friends, something which

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we are all familiar with from *l'esprit de l'escalier*, the telling retort which somehow escapes us until just too late.

Thereafter the solutions become still more sophisticated. 'Frost at Midnight' gives us an adult talking to a child as yet too young to speak—a familiar and necessary human practice which rests upon the assumption that at some point the child will suddenly begin to respond. Meanwhile the conversation can realistically remain one-sided. In 'The Nightingale', by contrast, the other participants are far from inarticulate since they are William and Dorothy Wordsworth. But the three friends are sitting in darkness to listen to the nightingales. It would be bad manners to interrupt the song. Coleridge's remarks, though conceived in a conversational way, are unvoiced and therefore unanswered. In every case the absent or unconscious companion, the silent participant, makes possible an informal discourse in which the author can stumble upon ideas, advance theories in a tentative and non-committal way, and ultimately make unexpected discoveries about himself.

The form is perhaps the Romantic movement's most original contribution to reflective poetry. Wordsworth, of course, makes remarkable use of it for 'Tintern Abbey', though his handling of the technical problem of the silent participant, in the shape of an awkwardly hovering Dorothy, may seem less assured than Coleridge's best examples. After Wordsworth and Coleridge, however, Matthew Arnold's 'Resignation' seems the only distinguished example of the form in the first half of the nineteenth century, and even Arnold fails to provide a really convincing explanation of his sister's silence, or to give us that 'return' to the literal and particular which both Wordsworth and Coleridge use with such power. It is therefore all the more remarkable that Rossetti should publish a conversation poem so skilfully conducted as 'Jenny', a poem dedicated like 'Frost at Midnight' to purposes of meditation and self-discovery in which we happen, instead of a sleeping child, to have a sleeping prostitute as the silent participant. Rossetti's pornography, his writing about a prostitute, is in the finished poem of 1869 an audacious response to the demands of a particular reflective form.

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Consider how skilfully the technical problem of the voiceless companion is here handled. Coleridge in his original experiment, 'The Eolian Harp' was unable either to exclude his dozing adult or properly to include her awakened voice at the end of the poem. Rossetti has learnt from his model. Jenny at the beginning of the poem is tired but just sufficiently awake to make an audible, though one-sided, conversation realistic. After ninety lines the speaker takes steps to stop her falling fully asleep. Half way through the poem Jenny is 'asleep at last' and remains so, but by this late point the audible address has become habitual. The problem is solved as sure-footedly as it had been in 'Frost at Midnight' by the use of a baby. Meditation is conducted with the informality of conversational thought but without the inconvenience of interruption.

Does 'Jenny' have any of the conversation poem's deeper qualities? It certainly possesses something of that acute sense of physical context, of the passing of actual time, found in 'Frost at Midnight'. Coleridge, wishing to give us not polished, retrospectively re-ordered thought but rather the erratic processes of the thinking mind, depicts a deliberately inscrutable movement from physical detail to generalized reflection, and provides also, in the 'film' fluttering in the grate, an image of the confused play of the mind. Rossetti's poem displays an identical concern:

> This room of yours, my Jenny, looks
> A change from mine so full of books . . .
>
> It was a careless life I led
> When rooms like this were scarce so strange
> Not long ago. What breeds the change, –
> The many aims or the few years?
> Because to-night it all appears
> Something I do not know again.
>
> The cloud's not danced out of my brain –
> The cloud that made it turn and swim
> While hour by hour the books grew dim.
> (lines 22-23, 37-45)

Coleridge's 'idling Spirit' moves from the fire on the hearth to recollection of his childhood, Rossetti's swimming brain

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from the decor of a room to speculation about the contents of another person's mind. It is not just the nature but also the setting and duration of the thinking that are indicated in both poems. Coleridge establishes an immediate sense of the warm, confined inner world of his cottage, and of the vast winter night outside. Rossetti similarly sets the most immediate context of his thought, the 'warm sweets open to the waist, / All golden in the lamplight's gleam', against the chaotic city beyond the window:

> Why, there's the dawn!
>
> And there's an early waggon drawn
> To market, and some sheep that jog
> Bleating before a barking dog;
> And the old streets come peering through
> Another night that London knew;
> And all as ghostlike as the lamps.
>
> So on the wings of day decamps
> My last night's frolic. Glooms begin
> To shiver off as lights creep in
> Past the gauze curtains half drawn-to,
> And the lamp's doubled shade grows blue, –
> Your lamp, my Jenny, kept alight,
> Like a wise virgin's, all one night!
>
> (lines 303-316)

The allusive final couplet of that passage is witty, but also a brilliant visual detail. The peculiar effect of a lamp left on in daylight brings the inner world and the world without into abrupt juxtaposition, just as Coleridge reintroduces 'the secret ministry of frost' into his final whisper over the cradle. Both poems, again, give us a glimpse into the past and another into the future, incorporate recollection and speculation into their strong sense of time now, of the immediate moment. Coleridge offers his urban schooldays and his baby's imminent, rural childhood. Rossetti provides Jenny's rural past and urban future, with simultaneous hints of his own previous and subsequent experiences.

Rossetti echoes and exploits the form christened by Coleridge in 1795 in still profounder ways. In 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' Coleridge is prevented by a scalded

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foot from accompanying his friends on a walk, and the poem is initially a lament for deprivation and inactivity. But the loss prompts an involuntary discovery about the nature of the imagination. As Coleridge imagines the experiences which his friends are undergoing:

> A delight
> Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
> As I myself were there! (lines 43-45)

The imagination is discovered to be as potent as experience itself. Without the initial inaction the moment of illumination would neither occur nor be understood. Similarly in 'Frost at Midnight' Coleridge is confined by the duty of baby-sitting. The world without is not only invisible but, with the solitary exception of an occasional 'owlet's cry', inaudible. Unable to perceive, he is also unable even to think. The 'Spirit' is 'idling', a thing of 'puny flaps and freaks'. The poet is entirely inactive, and yet, once again, the imagination comes unexpectedly to life. It creates not only the world without, but even (what perception could not do) the world of the past and of the future. The physical inaction which the poet laments paradoxically produces the displayed mental action. What is more, the illumination involved does not centrally consist of the explicit theorizing about how to bring up children (which one might compare with Rossetti's theorizing about the nature of lust). The implicit discovery is once again of *how* the mind works, and it is embodied in natural symbol. The 'secret ministry of frost', invisible and yet so potent that it can defy gravity, hanging up the water drops 'in silent icicles, / Quietly shining to the quiet Moon', is both the literal detail of the conversation poem's characteristic 'return' from theory, and the climactic image of the imagination.

In precisely the same way, the meaning of Rossetti's 'Jenny' is created by a combination of physical inaction and natural symbol. That sexual abstinence which so damages the poem for those readers who are determined to see it as dramatic monologue or social realism is, in fact, essential to its effect. The normal purpose of a visit to a prostitute—sex—remains conspicuously unfulfilled. The speaker is unable even to move while the sleeping Jenny's head remains upon his lap. Here is that absence of action so crucial to the

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Coleridgean effect, as well as the paradoxically active mind which reaches its climactic moment of illumination when the experience is expressed in natural symbol:

> And now without, as if some word
> Had called upon them that they heard,
> The London sparrows far and nigh
> Clamour together suddenly;
> And Jenny's cage-bird grown awake
> Here in their song his part must take,
> Because here too the day doth break.
>
> And somehow in myself the dawn
> Among stirred clouds and veils withdrawn
> Strikes greyly on her. (lines 323-332)

The dawn breaks in the outside world, then in the inner world of the room, finally in the ultimate interior, within the mind of the poet. It is a piece of quintessentially Romantic imagery. It is also something which reminds us of the phrase 'the value of monumental moments' in Rossetti's 1866 notebook entry on Coleridge.

Our slowness to recognise how vital this passage is to the poem's nature and structure may in part have arisen from the fact that 'Jenny' then continues for a further fifty-six lines and ends with a statement which seems to encourage the moralistic reading of the dramatic monologue critics. The first fifty of these lines are simply an unusually elaborate example of the 'return'. Having brought us down from theories on lust to the physical detail of the streets, Rossetti clearly feels that he must similarly replace the visionary conception of Jenny with a reassertion of her trivial, vain and mercenary reality ('Ah Jenny, yes, we know your dreams'). That is indeed one of the ways in which the poem is so resolutely unsentimental. But what are we to make of the actual conclusion?

> Well, of such thoughts so much I know:
> In my life, as in hers, they show,
> By a far gleam which I may near,
> A dark path I can strive to clear.
>
> Only one kiss. Good-bye, my dear.
> (lines 384-388)

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Isn't that 'dark path' a piece of preaching, a prim exhortation to reform?

If it seems to be so it is surely because of our prior assumptions about such imagery. If we consider how the motif is used elsewhere by Rossetti we receive a rather different impression. Here, for example, is 'The Hill Summit', a poem written as early as 1853 and subsequently incorporated into the sonnet sequence 'The House of Life'. Though biographers tell us that it is a recollection of a solitary walking tour in Warwickshire, the imagery is clearly used with a more than local significance:

> This feast-day of the sun, his altar there
> In the broad west has blazed for vesper-song;
> And I have loitered in the vale too long
> And gaze now a belated worshipper.
> Yet may I not forget that I was 'ware,
> So journeying, of his face at intervals
> Transfigured where the fringed horizon falls, –
> A fiery bush with coruscating hair.
> And now that I have climbed and won this height,
> I must tread downward through the sloping shade
> And travel the bewildered tracks till night.
> Yet for this hour I still may here be stayed
> And see the gold air and the silver fade
> And the last bird fly into the last night.

The 'bewildered tracks' which Rossetti must travel are his characteristic, dark vision of the whole of life. The gloom is occasionally broken by a moment of illumination, as it is on the hill summit and is again as dawn breaks in Jenny's room. But our habitual state, for Rossetti, is pain and darkness. The 'dark path I can strive to clear' of 'Jenny' is not a moral 'primrose path', a route to be avoided, but rather life itself made momentarily less incomprehensible by the experience which Rossetti has just undergone. The end of 'Jenny' represents not a lapse from meditation into moralising but rather a reinforcement of the meditative purposes which have sustained it throughout.

The identification of 'Jenny''s form is, of course, only a first step towards a fully critical discussion of the poem. The satirical acerbity of such writing as:

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Aye, or let offerings nicely plac'd
But hide Priapus to the waist,
And whoso looks on him shall see
An eligible deity . . .
(lines 365-368)

clearly springs from another area of poetic experience than the Coleridgean conversation poem. None the less the establishing of the poem's fundamental shape remains indispensable. It rescues the poem from persistent misrepresentation. It can also realert us to the pertinence of that dictum for which Rossetti is more notorious than celebrated. 'Conception, my boy', he wrote to Hall Caine, '*fundamental brainwork*, that is what makes the difference in all art'.[9] Critics determined to present Rossetti as a mere debaser of a Keatsian tradition have sometimes seemed almost outraged that he should have said something which they would so much have preferred to attribute elsewhere. A use of literary tradition so informed, and so discriminating, as that made in 'Jenny' can reassure us that it was said by the right man after all.

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NOTES

[1]See R. G. Howarth, 'On Rossetti's 'Jenny', *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 173, July-Dec. 1937, pp. 20-21; R. R. Howard, *The Dark Glass*, Ohio, 1972, pp. 100-101; G. Hough, *The Last Romantics*, 1949, p. 69; L. Stevenson, *The Pre-Raphaelite Poets*, Chapel Hill, 1972, p. 32.

[2]Quoted in A. C. Benson, *Rossetti*, 1904, p. 120.

[3]See O. Doughty, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 1957, p. 18; J. D. Hunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination*, 1968, p. 226.

[4]References are to the modern reprint, W. Acton, *Prostitution Considered in its Moral, Social and Sanitary Aspects*, London, 1972.

[5]J. D. Hunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination*, 1968, p. 229.

[6]Josephine Butler, *On the Moral Reclaimability of Prostitutes*, quoted in G. Petrie, *A Singular Iniquity*, 1971, p. 96.

[7]W. M. Rossetti (ed.), *The Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 1911, p. 607. All references to Rossetti are to this edition.

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[8]A. R. Jones, 'Coleridge and Poetry: II. The Conversational and other Poems' in R. L. Brett (ed.), *S. T. Coleridge*, 1971, p. 93.

[9]Quoted in T. Hall Caine, *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 1882, p. 249.

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Had Morris Gone Soft in the Head?

ROBERT CURRIE

This blunt, yet somehow poignant question, wrung from E. P. Thompson by the strange late prose romances, which so decisively dispose of the thesis of a Morris journeying *from* romantic *to* revolutionary, expresses a rather widespread unease aroused in Morris-scholars by *The Story of the Glittering Plain, The Well at the World's End*, and the rest. Not that the prose romances receive much critical attention. E. P. Thompson gives them eight out of his 825 pages; Paul Thompson (who confuses *The House of the Wolfings* with *The Wood beyond the World*) devotes but a few heated paragraphs to what he condemns as these 'gothic fancies of old age'; Paul Meier cites the '*récits romanesques*' once in his 862-page book on the Marxist Morris; and the *Journal of the William Morris Society* finds plenty to discuss elsewhere in Morris's vast production. I wish to argue that, nevertheless, the late prose romances, like *News from Nowhere*, with which they are closely connected, develop Morris's chief social and psychological preoccupations, and are thus central to his work.[1] [2]

Perhaps the least significant of these preoccupations was his involvement with manual wage-earners. Morris longed, in vain, to identify himself with 'the proletariat': hence, in the course of his famous socialist lecture 'How we live and how we might live', first given in 1884, he both offers 'my opinion as a middle-class man', and praises the mode of life which 'we the workers' enjoy. This involvement, for all its political expression, was basically emotional, since Morris was chiefly attracted to the *roughness* which, he believed, characterised manual wage-earners' fundamental health and honesty. 'Poor people, you know; rough people', says the time-traveller William Guest, in an unsuccessful attempt to tell his guide through Nowhere about the wage-workers of Victorian England. Morris idealized these rough people as the new barbarians, and relished 'the change in store for us hidden in the breast of the Barbarism of civilisation—the Proletariat'. 'How it consoles me to think of barbarism once more

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flooding the world, and real feelings and passions, however rudimentary, taking the place of our wretched hypocrisies', he exclaimed. In everyday life, however, Morris distrusted his relations with the proletarians. The respect he received (as a socialist propagandist) from wage-earning politicians, and (as an employer) from his hand-working employees, failed of course to guarantee every one of his relationships with members of lower socio-economic groups: and the anxieties this aroused in Morris are symbolised in William Guest's inexpressible shock as he returns from Nowhere, the land where even the dustmen treat one 'as gracefully as a troubadour', to the distancing 'servility' of the urban industrial poor.[2]

This problem in personal relationships reinforced what was for Morris a major problem of personality. Morris was not merely a bourgeois in fact rather remote from the proletarians with whom he wished to identify but a bourgeois engaged basically in the design of beautiful things for artistically-minded parsons and rich London women, who were neither much admired by manual wage-earners nor very apt representatives of the kind of person Morris wished to be. 'As things stand at the moment,' he complained to Andreas Scheu, 'I hang along with my creative work on to the apron-strings of the idle privileged classes'. Morris's fierce manner, heavy eating, 'rough beard' and 'disordered hair', the hands stained with dye, the old and dirty clothes, the swagger that caused him (to his great delight) to be mistaken for a sea-captain, were all outward manifestations of a disappointed desire to achieve a kind of manliness which he feared he lacked. 'I should think very little of the manhood of a stout and healthy man who did not feel a pleasure in doing rough work', he declared in 'How we live'. 'It's right down good sport trying how much pick-work one can get into an hour', exclaims young Dick Hammond in the course of an eulogy on road-mending in the *News*.[3]

The desire for rough work, the need to 'undergo a "trial by ordeal"', as John Purkis put it, seems to have been a highly important motive in Morris's two journeys to Iceland. But Morris was perhaps impelled to the 'Icelandic jaunt' above all by his forlorn hope of removing the greatest difficulty of his adult life, namely, the virtual failure of his marriage. It is

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now notorious that Morris married a stable-keeper's daughter, to whom he remained devoted, but whose extraordinary beauty so obsessed D. G. Rossetti also that, by 1871, the three were living together at Kelmscott in a triangle that Rossetti, with his intellectual and artistic ascendancy over Morris, totally dominated. Morris withdrew to Iceland, whence he returned smelling so strongly of raw fish and Norse sagas that the fastidious Rossetti fled. Yet though Morris had at last worsted his rival, he had not yet won his wife, who remained in a melancholy silence that in no way concealed her affection for Rossetti. Morris's later dedication to socialist agitation throughout Britain removed him, as had Iceland, from the pain of his wife's physical proximity; but scarcely freed him from his self-reproaches.[4]

Morris's attempts to cope with these self-reproaches shape the prose romances, and the *News*. These works, which occupied the last seven years of Morris's life treat, like the arras in the Guest-Hall at Higham-on-the-Way in *The Well at the World's End*, of 'the Pilgrimage of the Soul of Man'. Save in the *News*, the pilgrim is always a young person, or even a child; yet an old man usually appears on the road to the pilgrim's destination. Only the Sage of Swevenham in the *Well* and Hammond the Elder in the *News* combine the lore of age with contentment, strength of personality or self-assurance. The 'well-spoken carle of many words' whom Birdalone meets in *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* falls first into futile importunity and garrulous reminiscence, and soon after into drunken slumber; Sea-eagle, terrified of death in the *Glittering Plain*, has aged into 'ill blood and churlish malice'; and the cowardly old goodman Nicholas in *The Sundering Flood* hangs back whenever he deems that peril is at hand. The ordinary course of life's experiences in this world, concluding in ignominious old age, thus offers little to the pilgrim who, not surprisingly, takes flight into another world, or at least into an exceedingly distant place.[5]

Each such flight brings the pilgrim to or across water: whether to the Long Pools as in *Child Christopher*, to the Thames as in the *News*, to the island-dotted sea of the *Water*, or to the ocean of the *Glittering Plain*; and the importance of this element in Morris's symbolic pattern may be seen by the appearance, on the opening at last of the true road in the

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Well, of a 'sea of molten rocks' that, in its dry fashion, does service for the waters 'at the ending of the land', which in this book alone are the pilgrim's destination rather than his way. Whether this water be the symbol of the river that led from London to Kelmscott and Morris's wife, or of the ocean that led from Kelmscott to Iceland and freedom, it is as much autobiographical as archetypal. So, too, is the magic that fills the realm of the pilgrim's journey. Sometimes, of course, this magic does little more than convenience the plot of Morris's story: as when the Lady of Abundance causes the horse Silverfax to lead the Knight of the Sun astray in the *Well*; or when Steelhead enables Osberne to kidnap the Lord of Deepdale in the *Sundering Flood*. Yet magic has a deeper significance than this. 'I am in the hands of Weird, to wend as she will have me', says Osberne: and the magical power of fate to direct our lives is seen most characteristically, in the prose romances, in the spells with which a woman will 'cast the net for the catching of some goodly young man'. The confusions and beguilements that beset sexual life—even in the utopia of the *News*, where Dick's wife Clara 'got it into her head that she was in love with somebody else'—are the chief referents of symbols of magic in Morris's fiction. 'Many images have mocked me, and I have been encompassed with lies, and led astray by behests that have not been fulfilled', says Hallblithe, at the end of the *Glittering Plain*, in a confession that could be made by most of Morris's heroes.[6]

All these heroes are seeking a woman, even the fifty-six year old time-traveller William Guest finding that the beautiful Ellen of his utopian dream quickens once more the 'strange hopes' of his youth. Yet, in each case, the desired woman becomes, in characteristic romantic fashion, the symbol, the bearer almost, of an entire order of perfection and bliss. For the prose romances are all founded on a neo-pagan 'passionate love of the earth', in Guest's phrase; and this love is to be fulfilled only in an order purged of the circumpresent imperfections of everyday life. This neo-paganism is given fullest expression in socialist terminology in the *News*, and in mythical terminology in the *Well*. In the latter book, the Sage of Swevenham teaches the cult of the well, over a sacrificial altar where 'the ancient folk worship to the Gods of the Earth'. At the altar, the Sage bids his acolytes

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love 'the earth and the world with all your souls': a commandment to be fulfilled only with the attainment of the youth, loveliness and power conferred by the water of the well. The road to the well, the sole way to reach the neo-pagan higher order therefore, lies through Morris's version of the eternal feminine. Thinks Ralph of the Lady of Abundance, 'I need be no wiser than to learn how to meet her and to make her love me; then shall she show me the way to the Well at the World's End, and I shall drink thereof and never grow old, even as she endureth in youth, and she shall love me for ever, and I her for ever'.[7]

The quest, by a younger man, helped or hindered by an older man, over water, and under beguilment, for the perfect bliss of the eternal feminine: this is the structure of Morris's prose romances of 1889-1896. Within this structure Morris sought to express and, perhaps, to rationalize his various preoccupations. If the intensity of any particular concern may be measured by the quantity of his references to it, then socialism was of secondary or superficial interest to him in writing these works. Yet the prose romances (and not only the *News*) do display social concerns. Just as Morris wished to commend himself to manual wage-earners, and to further what he deemed to be their cause, so he wished to condemn the entrepreneurial and commercial order of which he was a part, but which seemed to him to be inimical both to that social group and its aspirations. In the *News* there is a rather brief and perfunctory recital of appropriate socialist slogans, such as Hammond the Elder's denunciation of the 'commercial slavery' which produced 'for some few a life of gambler's pleasure, and for many, or most, a life of mere misery'. But far greater affective content appears to attach itself to Morris's attack on commerce, commercial life, and those that engage in it. There are, indeed, good businessmen in the prose romances: Bartholomew Golden in the *Wood*, and (a little more ambiguously) Clement Chapman in the *Well*. Yet the *type* of commercial life, especially in the *Glittering Plain* and the *Sundering Flood* is the white-slave trade; and it cannot be surprising that some think that 'buying and selling' is 'fouling a fair name'. Certainly the total abolition of buying and selling is one of the most striking features of Nowhere.[8]

Battle on behalf of the poor against their (chiefly commercial

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tyrants occurs throughout the romances. In the *Sundering Flood* the knightly champion Sir Godrick leads 'the gilds of the Lesser Crafts and the husbandmen and simple mariners' against the wicked king and his supporters, the rich and mighty 'tyrants of the Porte'. In the *News* the 'Committee of Public Safety' of the Combined Workers' destroys the 'rich citizens' and all their works, including 'a place called Manchester which has now disappeared', in a violent uprising the description of which leaves William Guest 'trembling with excitement'. So, too, the Champions of the *Water* lead 'the valiant men of the crafts' against their foes; and Ralph, in the *Well*, leads the poor shepherds against theirs. To this extent, then, the prose romances do treat of social war, in conformity with Morris's socialist propaganda.[9]

What the romances make much more explicit than does the propaganda is the degree to which Morris was fascinated by the personal relationship of master and men. The only bad servant in his prose fiction is Surly John of the *Sundering Flood*, who, being malicious, lazy and cowardly, is beaten, mocked and paid off by his master. With the good servants of the romances—rough but trusty men—their masters enter into the closest bonds. Stephen the Eater, in the *Flood*, is a big tall man, 'who, if he ate two men's victuals, did three men's work'; and when Osborne departs on his quest for Elfhild, he gives over his household to Stephen, saying, 'I leave thee here in my skin'. Bull Shockhead, in the *Well*, is 'stout' and 'trusty', though 'a wild man', who 'shoved the victual into him doughtily'. Ralph captures but spares him, makes him his thrall, and then releases him: whereupon Bull Shockhead makes his master his brother, and initiates him into the folk of the Bulls. Puny Fox, 'the big red man' of the *Glittering Plain*, drinks 'good strong wine' from 'a great horn'. He pledges himself a thrall lifelong to Hallblithe; and the two men mingle their blood and swear 'friendship and brotherhood each to each'. Yet, despite the blood-brotherhood of master and man, both masters and men are to remain in their places. Even in the socialist ship of Morris's lecture on 'Communism' in 1893, there would still be 'captains and mates' and 'sailors and stokers'; and, for all the mystic inner bonds that would doubtless unite the crew and their officers, the outward asymmetries of authority would

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very probably continue. For it seems from the treatment of the one true menial of the *News*, the dustman Henry Johnson, who is mocked for his vulgarity, and ordered about by the more superior communists, that Morris had a rather livelier sense of his own affective demands on men of lower socio-economic status than he did of such men's actual experience of unequal social roles.[10]

This was necessarily so, since these demands arose from the pressing personal anxieties that Morris expressed at great length in the prose romances. Morris wished to be strong and rough; but feared that he was weak and soft; and weak, soft men abound in his fiction. Sometimes these men's weakness arises from their youth: Osberne is a child at the beginning of the *Sundering Flood*; and Ralph is the youngest of young men at the beginning of the *Well*; while Hallblithe is still 'little' at the end of the *Glittering Plain*. Yet often such male weakness is the consequence of the physical or spiritual power of other men. When Child Christopher is stabbed by a false companion, or Sir Thomas is first bewitched, and then humiliated and killed by the Red Knight in *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*, the unfortunate victims can at least point to treachery or magic as the cause of their downfall: but it is usually merely the strength of another that shames: whether for the moment, as when Ralph is pushed aside by the Captain of the Dry Tree at the beginning of the *Well*; or for life, as when Morfinn the Minstrel is castrated at the command of Ralph's enemy, Gandolf the Lord of Utterbol.[11]

Thus Walter in the *Wood* is by no means the only character in the prose romances who is 'no masterful man'. On the contrary, the more developed a male character is, the more likely he is to be mastered: by other men or, more commonly, by women. This circumstance gives men a peculiarly passive role in the presentation of the doctrine of the eternal feminine in Morris's fiction: so far from seizing the perfect bliss that awaits them, they have to be dragged to it. Walter is rescued by the Maid, who then yields herself to him; in the *Water*, the Champions only find their beloveds through the efforts of Birdalone; and Ralph is led to the well under the successive guidance of Dame Katherine, the Lady of Abundance, and Ursula. Without their women, Morris's male characters at once manifest all their weakness and softness, in faery and in

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communist utopia alike. Walter, having for a while lost the Maid in the wilderness, sinks into the keenest anguish: 'Then he fell to crying out concerning the beauty of her shaping, praising the parts of her body . . . and cursing the evil fate which had sundered him from the friendliness of her, and the peerless fashion of her'. Dick Hammond in the *News* accepts both his wife Clara's abandonment of him, and her return, in total passivity. He blushes and sighs at the thought of her; is 'stuttering and confused' at her approach; and is led by the hand by her, his face quivering with emotion. Finally, in case the reader should still fail to grasp the urgency and importance of this theme, Morris obliges several of his male characters to suffer, or to be threatened with, the shameful fate of leman to some beautiful but cruel fay who possesses men, possibly in search of the eternal masculine. Thus Walter yields to the Lady of the Woods; Arthur the Black Squire to the Queen of the Isle of Increase Unsought in the *Water*; and Morfinn to the Queen of Utterbol.[12]

Morrisian man has, therefore, to prove himself. He must at the very least experience that pleasure in 'rough work' which is the test of stout and healthy manhood. He will gain nothing from bookishness or from the 'clerk's work' of the mind: as Morris's explicit anti-intellectualism attests. 'Books, books! always books, grandfather!' exlaims Ellen, with much contempt, in *News from Nowhere*:

> 'When will you understand that after all it is the world we live in which interests us; the world of which we are a part, and which we can never love too much? Look!' she said, throwing open the casement wider and showing us . . . the moonlit garden . . . 'look! these are our books in these days!—and these,' she said, stepping lightly up to the two lovers and laying a hand on each of their shoulders.

Men are thus to work with their hands, rather than their minds, it seems. Yet 'rough work', in the sense of production by manual labour, is curiously absent from the prose romances. Even in the *News*, the main characters never in fact do the road-mending and haymaking they profess themselves so fond of. It is true that Hallblithe makes both a spear-stave and a skiff in the *Glittering Plain*; but the other heroes make next to nothing: even Osberne, who is said to

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have learned metal-work from Stephen the Eater, relying nevertheless on his man's smithing for the manufacture of presents for Elfhild. In short, the rough work of physical toil does not seem a very significant element in the probation which Morris's male characters must undergo.[13]

But physical violence does. In the *News* that kind of rough work is of course finished, at least for the time being: yet the very fact of the destruction of the rich citizens, and the obliteration of the English towns, indicates that there had been no shortage of violence in the epoch immediately preceding William Guest's journey to utopia. Elsewhere in the romances, men of violence abound: the Ravagers of the Isle of Ransom in the *Glittering Plain*, the Red Skinners of the *Sundering Flood*, the Fellowship of the Dry Tree in the *Well*, and so on. These men hold up the ideal of manhood. Thus, when the three Champions give a display of 'war deftness' in the *Water*, 'all this seemed to Birdalone both terrible and lovely' and when, in the *Flood*, Sir Mark leads his army ('that glorious piece of ordered might') away to the wars, the following days seem 'empty and dull' to Elfhild. Like Sir Mark, and the three Champions, Osberne, as a soldier, is used to professional killing. Ralph becomes a war captain in the *Well* and he, too, slays numerous foes. Even Walter manages to kill the dwarf in the *Wood*; and if Hallblithe fails to shed blood in the *Glittering Plain* he is, at least, already 'not untried in battle' before the story begins.[14]

It is of course literary blood which, in his literary fashion, Morris so generously spills; and such blood has a rich symbolic content. That content cannot be understood, except by reference to the sexual content of Morris's prose fiction as a whole. For Morris's concern with 'roughness' within and without was inseparable from sexual problems that necessarily involved affective violence. The characters in his fiction usually have strong sexual passions. They speedily feel 'heart's greediness', 'hot love', and 'longing beyond measure': the females no less than the males. Yet these passions soon take control, especially of males, such as Master Jacobus in the *Water*, who 'straightway', so soon as he saw Birdalone fell both into 'the captivity of her love' and into such pitiful importunings that she was reduced to 'pure weariness of his folly'. That which brings women to

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weariness and men to captivity and folly, must have considerable potential for ill: and this the prose romances do not conceal. Birdalone's charms, in particular, have a remarkable effect. Besides shaming Master Jacobus, she corrupts Leonard the priest; causes the deaths of the erstwhile comrades, the Black and the Red Knights, and the death of Baudoin, the Golden Knight, who comes to rescue her from both; and alienates Arthur the Black Squire from his betrothed Atra. Likewise, love of the Lady of Abundance in the *Well* leads to civil war in the Kingdom of the Tower; to mortal strife between the Knight of the Sun and his 'very earthly friend of friends', another Black Knight; and eventually to the deaths both of the Knight of the Sun and his brother, the Captain of the Dry Tree. In short, fascination by females leads to conflict, jealousy and shedding of blood among males, in Morris's fiction. But all *this* roughness fails to capture the females, and leaves the males in their essential weakness. 'Dost thou think it little-hearted in me?' asks Ralph as he confesses the 'torment' he suffers while the Lady of Abundance recounts her amatory history.[15]

If the gory rough work of the prose romances is undertaken in pursuit of an eternal feminine that, after all the bloodshed, may still elude the grasp of weak males, the symbol of woman in the romances must be somewhat ambivalent. Hence the simultaneous degradation and deification of women in those works. The ubiquitous clothes-fetishism of Morris's prose fiction (founded chiefly on the contrasts of armour, women's wear and nudity) indicates a kind of eroticism that becomes openly pornographic in *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*. That Morrisian women are so frequently humiliated and imprisoned, by other women as well as by men, that they are stripped for torment, 'shackled', 'dabbled with blood', and so on, gives a decidedly sadistic character to the truly 'rough' males' evaluation of a woman as 'bed-gear' or 'a choice piece of goods'. Yet these and other males worship women as goddesses. Thus Birdalone is worshipped on the Isle of Nothing; the Maid is worshipped by 'those wild men' the Bear-folk in the *Wood*; and the Lady of Abundance is plausibly reported to be worshipped by the Fellowship of the Dry Tree. These women are worshipped as providers of harmony, plenty and, above all, love. But even

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this apotheosis of the eternal feminine has sinister aspects: the cult of the Lady of Abundance, for instance, is associated with that of Our Lady of the Thorn; and she compares herself to Diana, an analogy not without menace for her Actaeon-like male devotees.[16]

All this might simply be interpreted as the often observed descent of romanticism into pornography were it not for the special turn taken by the sexual themes in the romances, and for the relationship between those themes and Morris's own well-documented sexual difficulties. The shaping personal experience of Morris's adult life was his failure to secure the loyalty of the wife whom he loved, but who preferred Rossetti. The dominant sexual theme in Morris's fiction is the morally ambivalent woman personified as *two* women: an evil witch who snares men, and thus deprives them of the blessings of the eternal feminine; and a good but enslaved young woman, who is forced to be the witch's bait, precisely by affording a glimpse of those blessings. As *The Wood beyond the World* reveals, the evil witch is the hero's own disloyal wife. Walter's wife (like Dick's wife Clara in the *News*) loves some one else. Hence there was this flaw in Walter's otherwise happy lot that

> he had fallen into the toils of love of a woman exceeding fair, and had taken her to wife, she nought unwilling as it seemed. But when they had been wedded some six months he found by manifest tokens, that his fairness was not so much to her but that she must seek to the foulness of one worse than he in all ways; wherefore his rest departed from him, whereas he hated her for her untruth and her hatred of him; yet would the sound of her voice, as she came and went in the house, make his heart beat; and the sight of her stirred desire within him, so that he longed for her to be sweet and kind with him, and deemed that, might it be so, he should forget all the evil gone by. But it was not so. . . .

and at last Walter flees from the house of his father, Bartholomew Golden (where Walter and the unfaithful wife had been dwelling), and eventually arrives at 'the Golden House', in the wood beyond the world, where lives the wicked Lady. When asked by the Lady how fair this 'false

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woman' was, Walter answers—diplomatically but instructively—that 'I was going to say that she was wellnigh as fair as thou; but that may scarce be. Yet she was very fair'.[17]

'Many a time hath' this wicked Lady 'cast the net for the catching of some goodly young man', Walter learns from the Maid who is used in the Lady's spells. Just so, in the *Glittering Plain*, the daughter of the Undying King has the Hostage kidnapped in order to catch Hallblithe; and just so, too, in the *Water*, the witch of Evilshaw kidnaps Birdalone in order 'to bait the trap with her for the taking of the sons of Adam', and to turn her into 'a half-devil for the undoing of manfolk'. But at last the witch is confounded, the good young woman escapes; she and the young man marry; and they live happily ever after: then perhaps the eternal feminine is at last attained, and found to be good. Meanwhile, however, the young woman drudges for the witch, who tortures her in various ways: most significantly by forcing her to watch her lover being wooed by her wicked mistress. Thus the Lady of the *Wood* requires the scantily clad Maid to serve her as she caresses Walter, 'taking no more heed of her unfortunate slave 'than if she were one of the pillars of the hall'; while, in the *Water*, the Queen of the Isle of Increase Unsought (who generally does things wholesale) chains the invisible Aurea, Atra and Viridis to pillars from which they are forced to watch their lovers, the three Champions, being seduced by the Queen, to the accompaniment of music which she requires her unseen victims to make.[18]

The prose romances are, therefore, rather like that arras in the Castle of Abundance on which Ralph sees 'figured over and over again two women, whereof one old and the other young, and the old one was clad in grand attire' and 'sat . . . or stood looking on as the young one worked . . . and this one was clad in sorry and scanty raiment'. But there is a further complexity to the symbol, in that (at its most fully developed) it includes not two but three women: the evil witch, her slave and a good witch—Habundia in the *Water*, the Lady of Abundance in the *Well*—who aids the slave's release. The good witch is, however, the double of the slave: Habundia and Birdalone are as if 'cast in one mould'; and Ursula is mistaken for the Lady of Abundance. Thus the good witch symbolises not so much a separate force as that

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inherent benevolence which, despite all, at last overthrows female beguilement and reveals the true goodness and beauty of woman. Nevertheless, these triads are very important to Morris's symbolic structure. Indeed, in the *Well*, they appear to be infinitely extended: the Teacher of Lore rescuing, from the Sorceress, the Lady of Abundance; who then rescues Ursula from the 'old Queen' of the Dry Tree; so that Ursula goes to Utterbol and Agatha escapes from the wicked queen of that land; and so forth. Finally, it is to be noted that the good young woman who escapes is (like Morris's wife) low-born. Ursula is a serving-maid; Birdalone's mother is a 'poor-wife'; and Elfhild is 'a woman of the husbandmen, a churl's daughter'. For here, too, Morris's fiction symbolises his major preoccupations: and to those preoccupations his wife was central.[19]

In two respects E. P. Thompson's question about the prose romances—'Had Morris gone soft in the head?'—is imprecisely phrased. For if Morris was soft in the head when he wrote these remarkable works, he had been soft in the head, in the sense that he had just those concerns that are so forcibly presented in the romances, over many years: and perhaps since the very earliest days of his marriage. Moreover, very much that appears in the allegedly problematical romances also appears in the *News*, which Thompson describes as a 'characteristic expression of Morris's genius, springing so logically from his development both as a creative artist and as a political theorist'. The quest-form, the water symbolism, the clothes-fetishism, the bloody rough work, the eternal feminine and much else besides, are all found in this 'Scientific Utopia', as Thompson terms it. And if we do not there have the triad of slave and witches, we do have, in Clara, the faithless wife *in propria persona*. If soft in the head in the prose romances, Morris suffered from the same condition in *News from Nowhere*.[20]

We might, of course, conclude that Morris was indeed soft in the head in that he devoted so much effort to the production of works which (apart from the *News*, with its special appeal to political enthusiasts) have had so critical a reception over so long a period, and which, furthermore, manifest so many seemingly scandalous characteristics: the outlandish forms, the obscure myths, the insistent sexuality, the highly

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artificial, semi-archaic language, and so on. But criticism is, at least in part, related to movements in taste; and, just as, in this decade, half a century of general distaste for the sort of myth-making exemplified by the prose romances has given way to a rather more sympathetic response to work like the *Well* and the *Wood* (now reprinted for the first time in nearly 60 years), so too the earlier criticisms of Morris's prose fiction begin to acquire a slight period flavour. 'I suspect that I may be criticised . . . for giving inadequate attention to the prose romances', Thompson admitted in the 1976 postscript to the revised version of his book on Morris.[21]

In any event, certain of the complaints made against the romances seem rather misconceived. Paul Thompson condemned them as an 'utterly unreal world of natural happiness'; a strange remark, not only because all fiction (whether about knights-errant, collective farmers, or despondent housewives) is by definition an unreal world, but because Morris's particular fictional universe is not noticeably happy. For Morris presents a world characterised by doubt, cruelty, intense sexual passion, and unattainable or ambivalent goals. Yet this is a world that expresses Morris's most profound concerns. As such, it necessarily takes the form of a symbolic autobiography: an *unhappy* autobiography, about Morris's relationships with manual workers; about his own sense of inadequacy; about Rossetti; about Jane Morris. The subjects of these concerns were very near to Morris; what he had to say about them was often exceedingly violent. Hence, for aesthetic as well as prudential reasons, the distancing and concealing artificiality of plot, character, and language. This last point has of course particularly annoyed his critics. Morris wrote the prose romances, more or less, in a strange part-Lowlands, part Anglo-French language (somewhat inspired by Scott) that has offended not only those readers who dislike using a dictionary but also those readers who have reasoned objections to words like 'all-boun', 'kenspeckle', or 'faitours', and to the use of phrases such as 'dight his bever' for 'made his supper'. Yet the literary and psychological purposes of the device—namely, the articulation of, and self-dissociation from, exceedingly powerful emotions—seem neither trivial nor wilful. And the effect, not only of the language of the romances, but of their entire

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structure and organisation, is perhaps not completely without merit. Yeats, for one, read them with pleasure; and he was not totally devoid of discrimination in literary matters.[22]

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NOTES

[1]E. P. Thompson, *William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary*, London, 1977, p. 680; Paul Thompson, *The Work of William Morris*, London, 1967, p. 158 (cf. 1977 edn., p. 178); Peter Faulkner (ed.), *William Morris, The Critical Heritage*, London & Boston, 1973, p. 93; Paul Meier, *La Pensée Utopique de William Morris*, Paris, 1972, pp. 11, 593.
[2]William Morris, *The Collected Works of William Morris with Introductions by his Daughter May Morris*, London, New York, etc, 1910-15, vol. XVI, pp. 22-3, 26, 210; vol. XXIII, pp. 10, 23, 204; J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, London, New York, etc, 1901, vol. II, p. 144.
[3]E. P. Thompson, pp. 88-9, 251; *CW*, XVI, 47; XXIII, 21.
[4]Philip Henderson, *William Morris, His Life Work and Friends*, London, 1967, *passim*; R. C. H. Briggs, 'Letters to Janey', *Journal of the William Morris Society*, vol. I, no. 4, Summer, 1964; John Purkis, *The Icelandic Jaunt, A Study of the Expeditions Made by Morris to Iceland in 1871 and 1873*, Kew, 1962, pp. 6-7, 28.
[5]*CW*, XIV, 304; XVIII, 25; XX, 89-91; XXI, 76-7.
[6]*CW*, XIV, 316; XVI, 55; XVII, 34, 152-4; XVIII, 146; XIX, 35, 87; XXI, 98-100, 142.
[7]*CW*, XVI, 187, 207; XVIII, 116-17; XIX, 29, 36, 88.
[8]*CW*, XIV, 221; XVI, 104, 109; XVIII, 208-210; XXI, 166, 199, 206f, 234-5.
[9]*CW*, XVI, 108ff; XIX, 230-4; XX, 386; XXI, 145, 179-80.
[10]*CW*, XIV, 220, 222, 302, 319; XVI, 21-2; XVIII, 242-5, 273-6; XXI, 12-15, 21-2; XXIII, 275.
[11]*CW*, XIV, 301; XVII, 148, 157; XVIII, 18, 293; XX, 204ff; XXI, 188-9.
[12]*CW*, XVI, 50-6; XVII, 66, 111; XVIII, 322; XX, 229.
[13]*CW*, XIV, 211, 292; XVI, 150; XX, 142; XXI, 47.
[14]*CW*, XIV, 211; XX, 117-18; XXI, 228.

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[15]*CW*, XVIII, 122, 132, 167, 176ff, 192-3, 201, 205; XIX, 145-8; XX, 66, 77-8, 107, 110, 142, 150-7, 159-84, 188, 193ff; XXI, 74.
[16]*CW*, XVII, 20-1, 60, 108, 114; XVIII, 69, 101, 148; XX, 62, 168-9, 174, 196, 210, 296, 304; XXI, 166.
[17]*CW*, XVII, 1, 37, 54.
[18]*CW*, XIV, 265ff, 301; XVII, 34-5, 75, 88-9; XX, 10, 242-4, 354.
[19]*CW*, XVIII, 38f, 105, 155, 182-3, 193; XIX, 150; XX, 2, 19; XXI, 221.
[20]E. P. Thompson, pp. 692-3.
[21]*ibid.*, p. 765.
[22]Paul Thompson, p. 158; Faulkner, pp. 415-17.

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Old Pip: The Ending of *Great Expectations*

A. L. FRENCH

I SHALL ARGUE first that *Great Expectations* is carefully and precisely set at a definite period in the nineteenth century; and secondly that the debate of its main action compels us to read the ending in one way and one way only—a way which has hitherto escaped notice and which disposes of the problem that exercised Martin Meisel and Marshall W. Gregory (*E in C*, July, 1965, and October, 1969).

In chapter 46 Pip tells us that the bridge he has to row through to get Magwitch down the Thames and out of the country is Old London Bridge. This bridge was notorious for its narrow arches and the consequent riskiness of what in the same chapter is called 'shooting' it. Now, as it was pulled down in 1831, Magwitch's return from Australia must be before that year, so we can infer that, at the latest, he came back in the winter of 1829-30 and tried to escape in March 1830 (see chapter 54 for the month). Pip tells us (39) that at this time he was aged twenty-three: he must therefore have been born in or about 1807. We learn (50) that when he first met the convict in the churchyard he was in his 'seventh year', so that event probably took place at Christmas 1814. If Pip was apprenticed at the usual age—fourteen—that must have been in 1821, and Mr Jaggers came to take him off to London (18) in the 'fourth year' of his apprenticeship—1826, when he was eighteen.

These dates, if Dickens had a consistent time-scheme in mind, must be right to within a year or so; and there are various 'period' touches throughout which keep reminding us that the main action of the novel is to be felt as taking place a *long* time before it was published in 1860-61: there are many phrases like 'as it was then' (25) or 'At that time' (28) or 'that time' (39), or mentions of the Hummums in Covent Garden where you could always get a bed 'in those times' (45) or the theatre where Mr Wopsle played pantomime (47) which is 'nowhere now'. This sense of the past's distance is confirmed

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by the references to the hulks and transportation, coaches (there are no railways), the King (5), the 'extinct red-waist-coated police' (16) and the wistful evocation of eighteenth-century elegance in chapter 33.

Proceeding, then, to reconstruct the novel's time-scheme, we can deduce that if Pip recovered from his brain-fever by the summer of 1830 ('June weather', chapter 58) and went abroad later the same year, it would have been 1841 when he returned to England and he would then be aged thirty-four. We note at the beginning of chapter 59 the striking specificity of '*eleven years*' instead of the conventional 'many years' that Dickens would presumably have used if he had wanted the time of the ending to remain indefinite.

All this, I imagine, is common ground—I've been doing little more than basing simple sums on the material provided by Angus Calder, the Penguin English Library editor, who in turn was drawing on T. W. Hill's notes. That the 'ground' was common to Dickens too is shown by a list of 'Dates' that accompanies the MS. of *Great Expectations* at Wisbech, a list that suggests his planning of the novel's chronology to have been quite conscious (see the Penguin edn., p. 497). But there is no general agreement as to how Dickens meant us to take the ending. One problem is that, as everyone knows, he dropped his original ending, in which Pip and Estella met again by chance on a London street only to part again for ever, and substituted the one we are familiar with. But even that exists in two slightly different versions. In the serial publication and the first bound edition of 1861, the last phrase was: 'I saw the shadow of no parting from her'; but later this was altered to read: 'I saw no shadow of another parting from her'. Both of these new endings are, or at least have been found, puzzling, in that they appear to leave it open to us to decide whether we're to think of Pip and Estella as marrying or parting.

I maintain that, because of the book's time-scheme, the ending is not ambiguous at all in either of its versions. The last chapter is in the past tense, which implies it is written in a Present from which Pip is looking back, and it seems only natural to assume that this Present is the present of the date of publication. There is, at all events, no indication to the contrary; and, what is more, other Dickens endings are

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couched firmly in a present tense which is not contradistinguished from the reader's present. *David Copperfield*, for example, ends with the hero saying: 'I turn my head, and see [Agnes's face], in its beautiful serenity, beside me'; and the last chapter of *Bleak House* starts with Esther reflecting: 'Full seven happy years I have been mistress of Bleak House', and ends with what her husband has said to her 'A night or two ago'.

It is true that *Great Expectations* ends in the past tense, but a past implies a present and this present, in the absence of any reasons for thinking otherwise, can only be taken as the first readers' present, viz. 1861. If that is the case, it follows that the Pip who is telling his story is aged fifty-four, and the encounter with Estella at the site of Satis House is twenty years in the past. But then we naturally ask: if Pip has married Estella in the interim, why in the world doesn't he tell us? Since he doesn't, can we not only suppose that he hadn't married her? And whether we apply 'no' to 'parting' or to 'shadow', the last phrase of the novel must either way mean that he didn't, in 1841, think the parting would happen, but he was wrong, and it has. He didn't see the 'shadow', but it was really there, and he has been living in it for two decades.

The only ways out of this conclusion are to suppose (1) that Dickens just abandoned his own carefully-elaborated time-scheme when he revised the ending, or else (2) that his readers in 1861 would have felt the story to have been written down at some earlier period, say the mid-1840s, and then laid aside for fifteen years (though Dickens nowhere hints this). To these arguments we may add (3) that the original ending, which left Pip solitary, was changed because Bulwer Lytton objected to it for precisely that reason (see Forster's *Life*, Book IX, chapter 3). Dickens did make the change, yet he writes about it with obvious contempt: 'I have put in as pretty a little piece of writing as I could, and I have no doubt the story will be more acceptable through the alteration.' I suggest that the revised ending, if read inattentively and with the usual Victorian expectations about endings, could deserve the author's scorn by appearing to sanction a Pip sentimentally redeemed. But if we read the ending with the book's chronology in mind, we see that Dickens hasn't betrayed his artistic conscience because he has carefully implied, for the attentive

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reader, a psychologically right end for the hero. The Pip who is writing *Great Expectations* is, at fifty-four, well into a futile and celibate middle age: like Arthur Clennam, he has come back from the East tanned and empty, but for him there will be, could be, no Amy Dorrit.

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Book Reviews

FURTHER ADVENTURES 'UNDER GROUND'

The English Vice: Beating, Sex and Shame in Victorian England and After. By IAN GIBSON. Duckworth, 1978; £12.50.

Ian Gibson's subject is the English preoccupation with corporal punishment, especially the 'lower discipline' practised in public schools; the curious persistence of the use of the cane or the birch into the twentieth century; and the consequences for those subjected, as victim or spectator, to the ritualistic beating of bared bottoms. For Gibson the evidence pointing to a causal relationship between public school beating and sexual dislocation, whether that of impotence, flagellomania or homosexuality, is incontrovertible. Flagellomania, 'always exclusively centred on the buttocks', deserves the appellation, 'le vice Anglais', because of its predominantly masochistic form. Flagellation fantasies involve an infantile male relishing the whip at the hands of a nearly Amazonian female, often playing the rôle of nurse or governess. Gibson sets out to document what the educated Englishman may already know, and the working-class Englishman may eagerly suspect: the fascination of a certain class with sexual flagellation as revealed in letters, memoirs, respectable Victorian and Edwardian periodicals and pornographic writings. In his concluding chapters, Gibson offers a psychological interpretation of the significance of the 'lower discipline' and of flagellation fantasies. Concerned as he is with beating and sexual deviation as class phenomena, Gibson does not, however, fit the beating ritual into the social and political reality which it, in part, helped to create. Rather, he dwells upon the personal dimensions of beating, avoiding the broader implications of the institution he describes.

The English Vice becomes another of those works, now recognizable as a sub-genre, which directs us into the sexual underworld of Victorian and Edwardian England. Such an underworld acts as a refracting mirror, capturing in a new light the values of those who live, perhaps too confidently, in

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the above-ground world of conventional economic activity and sexuality. The best known and most influential of such studies may be *The Other Victorians* in which Steven Marcus explores Victorian pornography, seeing it as the obverse side of that official version of human sexuality promulgated by a William Acton. In a similar way, Ian Gibson discusses the Victorian denial of childhood sexuality and the sanctioning of corporal punishment in home and school by references to scriptural maxims, principally, 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' (attributed to *Proverbs*, but unwittingly appropriated by conventional society from Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*). Gibson then introduces us to a nether world, to the flagellation brothels of St. John's Wood and to the fantasies of those given over to masochistic flagellomania. At the figurative centre of Gibson's book lurks Frederick Hankey, an Englishman living in Paris, the friend of Swinburne, Richard Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), Richard Burton and Henry Spencer Ashbee, 'Pisanus Fraxi', *the* Victorian bibliographer of erotica. Hankey emerges from the depths as a semi-obscene presence, a *devoté* of the divine Marquis and sadism, described by the Goncourt brothers in their collaborative journal as 'a madman, a monster, one of those men who live on the edge of the abyss. Through him, as through a torn veil, I [sic] had a glimpse of an appalling aspect, a terrible side to a wealthy, blasé aristocracy—the English aristocracy. . . '.

I quote the Goncourts' account because Frederick Hankey illustrates the difficulties the practitioners of this sub-genre confront as they touch upon the most volatile of subjects. Marcus defined the problem in his 'Preface': 'My hesitations and doubts had in part to do with the subject itself [pornography], with its dubiousness, its difficulty, its capacity to trouble and disturb'. Discussions of human sexuality and of sexual deviation, relying upon letters, memoirs or literary works of varying quality, are inherently titillating. Such studies gather together material appealing not only to those beyond the pale of a hypothetical normality, but to the voyeur in each of us. Such material, however clumsily written, is potent enough to remind us of the fragile nature of our treasured normality. The veil may be torn for every reader with the courage to admit to a shock of recognition.

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Within *The Other Victorians* and *The English Vice*, Marcus and Gibson tread a rhetorical tightrope. Tone necessarily becomes a preoccupation. Their seriousness of manner is designed to neutralize the pornographic appeal of the documents they cite. But such seriousness may congeal into moral earnestness or pedantry, strategies for distancing a writer from his problematic subject. The other temptation, not surprisingly, is strained wit. But a failed witticism, degenerating into a snicker, betrays an author's uneasiness. The effect of the snicker or of the high moral tone is to exile the human figures of whom we are reading into a no-man's-land of the merely monstrous. Always the danger is to forget that, after all, 'nothing human is alien to me': even that infantile perspective informing pornography and flagellation fantasies whispers to us seductively throughout our adult lives.

In his own way, Ian Gibson stoically adheres to the rules of the game. In *his* 'Preface', he announces his intention 'to avoid theoretical considerations in the first six chapters, . . . to let the material presented speak for itself. . . '. The remark obliquely suggests the anxiety of influence. Both Mario Praz, in *The Romantic Agony*, and Steven Marcus have, as Gibson acknowledges, discussed sexual flagellation in Victorian England. Gibson, to avoid writing what might seem a lengthy footnote to earlier studies, devotes long chapters to the history of judicial and military flogging and to flagellant correspondence columns in Victorian periodicals. Through over-scrupulous documentation he seeks to make the subject his own and to demonstrate that, no less than Marcus, he is properly serious, neither seduced by his material, nor pandering to his audience's itch to know. But such scrupulosity leads to a serious discontinuity in his book. *The Other Victorians* and Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's breezy *The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny* are readable because interpretation and speculation occur throughout the two books. In withholding interpretation until his final chapters, Gibson fails to do justice to the genuinely fascinating story of Eton, Swinburne and the Swinburne circle; and he skirts the provocative issues he has raised, implicitly and explicitly, along the way.

Gibson's first chapter, in which he provides a survey of writings on 'flagellation as a sexual stimulant', is indicative.

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Gibson ranges from a 1629 Latin treatise by the German Johann Heinrich Meibom, the first standard work on flagellation, to Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886). The survey, touching upon Cleland, Rousseau, de Sade and William Acton among others, is potentially intriguing, for every discussion of sexual deviation poses profound human questions. Meibom's observation that flagellation possessed a sexual component stirred debate in the seventeenth century, and later, about flagellation as a scripturally sanctioned form of mortification of the flesh. His treatise inevitably posed a threat to the authority of the Church. The ensuing debate illustrates once more the significance of the doctrine of original sin in determining Christian and post-Christian attitudes towards the body. Later, Rousseau's account of his childhood experience at the hands of Mlle. Lambercier implicitly rejected the doctrine of original sin and urged the significance of environment, of the past, in one's personal history; and it proclaimed the fact of childhood sexuality, a fact stubbornly denied throughout the nineteenth century, and after.

The theological debate, initiated by Meibom's treatise, compelled churchmen, yet again, to argue over the literal or figurative status of the Word, an issue touching finally upon the status of Meibom's words. Meibom wrote in a pre-psychological era; he employed a mechanistic language appropriate to the faculty psychology of his time, a language we may see as quaintly figurative. But modern psychology is itself impossible without a figurative language, 'the figurative language peculiar to psychology', as Freud observed. The problematic status of language becomes one of Gibson's subjects. Yet, he fails to remind us, or himself, that his own interpretations, indebted as they are to the evolutionary tropes of psychoanalysis, are necessarily figurative and may suffer the fate of Meibom's explanations.

As he implicitly dramatizes the volatility of language, Gibson exposes the volatility of human desire. The Marquis de Sade mounted a systematic pre-Freudian assault upon prevailing notions of the natural. Any discussion of sexual practices and of sexual deviation must confront the issue of normality. Gibson carefully uses the word, 'normal', within quotation marks. As Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of*

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Sexuality suggests, heterosexuality may not be biologically inherent for human beings: it may be a culturally and historically induced sexual orientation. Books like *The Other Victorians* and *The English Vice* reveal the fragility of all human conventions. Through them we glimpse what Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann call the 'plasticity' of human nature and the social construction of reality, a reality generated by symbolic gestures, both verbal and non-verbal.

Gibson avoids these larger issues, concentrating upon the phenomenon of beating in the public school. In his account, Eton emerges as the quintessential public school, a microcosm of other institutions: Gibson claims that naval ships 'were run like floating boarding schools for adults, on public school lines'. Some may be tempted to dismiss Gibson's claims as pretentious or as an expression of class pique, but only by denying that there is any meaning in the beating ceremony, by refusing to recognize that all institutions of this sort serve a larger social function.

At Eton the condemned youth was led to a flogging block, 'a portable wooden step on which the victim knelt with his trousers down to receive his punishment on the naked buttocks'. The boy did not see the face of the wielder of the rod (though he would, of course, know him). Nor would he clearly see the other boys gathered to watch the spectacle, though its public nature was crucial for the victim and the spectator. Etonians traditionally spoke of the experience as the 'execution', although, in Gibson's words, ' . . . on the Eton block nates, not necks, were cut'. In the use of the word, 'execution', there is something at once apt and pathetic. This figurative execution is far removed from the executions of princes or of traitors in earlier times. The schoolboy victim was to be shamed and degraded, as Gibson emphasizes, compelled to assume a passive stance as he offered his buttocks to the commanding figure behind him, his genitals almost, but not completely, obscured from the sight of his fellow students. In the truly horrific drawing and quartering of a Damiens, as described by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, the regicide was acknowledged as a real threat: his hand often held the parricidal knife. A public school beating denied the potency and the masculinity of the victim before the Master acting 'in loco parentis': 'There he

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stood, stern and statuesque, with his nose sublimely elevated, and the birch rod in his hand—eternal thunder "settled on his head"'. The full significance of the phrase, 'in loco parentis', like the rod itself, swells before us: 'I had pictured a rod as nothing more than a handful of twigs, but this thing was nearly five feet long, having three feet of handle and nearly two of bush'. The rod becomes the veritable 'engine' of classic pornography.

The scene, recorded in memoir after memoir, becomes a text to be read, demanding the comments of the literary critic. For the memoirs of Old Etonians do not *quite* speak for themselves. The personal and social dimensions of the 'ceremony', as it is euphemistically called, need to be made more explicit. The Master with his rod acts for the father who feminizes the son. The descriptions of the 'ceremony' call to mind the 'Wolf Man's' story. Freud, perhaps more poet than therapist, conjures up a real or imaginary primal scene in which the patient, as a small child, observes his parents in intercourse 'a tergo'. The scene is disorienting because the child is tempted to identify with the mother and with the father. A similar choice is presented to the watching schoolmates. The temptation to identify with the yielding victim becomes as strong as the apparently official aim of the beating, which is to compel identification with the Master and to 'harden' the onlooker to the victim's sufferings.

Such psychoanalytic dabblings on my part may annoy English and American readers. Gibson himself opts for a refreshing eclecticism to avoid psychoanalytic reductivism. He speaks of fathers and of castration, but also invokes the work of D. W. Winnicott, Fritz Perls, Desmond Morris and others. Yet, in so doing, he vitiates the potential force of his argument. 'The British Empire, it might be argued, was founded on the lash', Gibson states, and he speaks of those sadists and masochists who were its instruments. But this observation remains undeveloped. Gibson does not really place the 'lower discipline' in its full context. The English Vice does not simply begin at home to spread to the farthest reaches of the Empire. It is a social institution implicitly designed to perpetuate the values of a society and to consolidate a particular vision of the world. Within the public school a symbolic universe was created. This universe possessed

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uncanny connections to the nursery. But it was the universe the public school graduate was to inhabit, and recreate, as an adult. It was a Nietzschean world divided into masters and slaves. The boys watching the ceremony were to learn a political lesson: it was far better to wield power than to be subjected to it. If positions of authority demanded hardness of those who inherited them, so be it. What was not foreseen, at least not clearly, was the possibility of the onlooker's identification with the slave rather than with the master. Either identification, in psychoanalytic terms, may lead to fixation, to sexual dislocation, and to an obsession with flagellation.

Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* suggests a way of fixing the beating ceremony in an even larger historical context. Gibson connects the reddening of the buttocks with that blush upon other cheeks, with a sense of vulnerability and of shame. But blushing occurs ordinarily in the presence of others. It has to do with being seen, or being seen into. The Panopticon, Jeremy Bentham's unnerving conception of the model prison, was constructed on the principle that prisoners were to believe themselves perpetually under the gaze of a Director in a central tower who was himself invisible to them: the inmates could never know if they were, in fact, being observed. The beating ritual of the public school stands between the public execution of a regicide like Damiens and the Panopticon, which was modelled implicitly upon the family structure emerging in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The figure in the tower represented, not the king, but the father. He stood 'in loco parentis' to each inmate: the Panopticon was a nightmare version of the nuclear family.

The Master, with his rod or cane, is the equivalent of Bentham's Director. His gaze, and the gaze of the spectators, is directed upon the swished victim. The gaze, internalized, is borne within the victim wherever he may go, forever observing, forever capable of inducing the inevitable blush of shame. Appropriately, flagellation fantasies require that a woman inflict the whipping, not simply to obscure the male identity of the dominant figure, but to mark the victim's hopeless confusion about his sexual identity. The figure behind the kneeling 'boy' is male and female: it is Medusa whose gaze turns men to stone. The personal and cultural

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crises fuse in a powerful image. As Marcus states, '. . . sexuality has become problematical, but it is sexuality in its specific heterosexual form that is being threatened'. Simultaneously, we are seeing, as Foucault's works imply, the *creation* of the 'superego' within the modern personality.

Although rich in the written documents it offers as evidence, *The English Vice* is, unfortunately, not a literary study. The memoirs especially, as I have said, cry out for further literary comment. They also often point, as do the fiction and the verse Gibson quotes, to some of the canonical texts of Victorian and Edwardian England. A passage from Swinburne's fragmentary novel, *Lesbia Brandon*, is wonderfully suggestive:

> Herbert felt the laughter like a swift lash round the loins, and his cheeks caught fire; his fingers turned to thawing ice, the roots of his hair prickled and burnt the skin; he smarted and sickened with helpless shame and horrible fear of the next word or look. He did not even see how the transgressor for his part turned white and black with horror at himself and made apparently endeavours to get bodily into his napkin.

The scene is part D. H. Lawrence, part Lewis Carroll. The ambiguities of the final phrase recall the Mad Hatter and the March Hare stuffing the Dormouse (head-first?) into the teapot. Lewis Carroll crowds the whole of the Victorian age into the four constricting walls of the nursery and the schoolroom. He knew the dilemmas posed by the human body; he felt the power of the word or the glance to cut, as surely as the rod, to the quick. In the Queen's garden the nursery and the schoolroom are in chaos. The fragile self, exposed to innumerable threats, flirts with fixation and regression. In the Cheshire Cat Lewis Carroll imagines a comic transcendence, leavened with a sense of pathos. The command, 'Off with [your] head', becomes the credo of the adult world. The only sure refuge from the vulnerability of the body and the force of the word or the glance lies in headlong flight towards the smile of pure transcendence or the vale of invisibility. The Cheshire Cat abandons the body, to gaze down upon a world in which a flamingo is, alas, never *just* a flamingo, words are forever ambiguous, and screaming viragos, playing-card

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Medusas, assert the awful trinity of the body, sexuality and death. In the stylized, controlled realm of the flagellant fantasy, in which nothing unforeseen is permitted, the flagellant succumbs to his infantile vision. In *Alice in Wonderland* the infantile perspective serves the artist: through it, he sees chaos and comprehends it, achieving a release the eternal 'boys' of the public school and of the flagellation fantasy were never to experience.

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JAMESIAN AMBIGUITY

Techniques of Ambiguity in the Fiction of Henry James. By RALF NORRMAN. Abo Akademi, 1977.

The Concept of Ambiguity—The Example of James. By SHLOMITH RIMMON. The University of Chicago Press, 1977; £13.30.

Just as he described *The Turn of the Screw* as 'a piece of ingenuity pure and simple, of cold artistic calculation, an amusette to catch those not easily caught', so James tells us that his equally celebrated literary puzzle, 'The Figure in the Carpet', represented 'an attempt to reinstate analytic appreciation'. He imagined it exciting 'so much baffled calculation'. The remarks ambush us from the prefaces and remind us that as a sophisticated and self-conscious literary craftsman James can engage with his audience at the level of 'fun' and manipulation. For some this makes him a specifically modern writer, where modernity consists in the artist's full and open consciousness of his resources, methods and effects.

This preoccupation is registered in these books on Jamesian ambiguity, since for both critics ambiguity is one of the most intentional and considered of literary effects. According to Norrman it has little if anything to do with the 'mimetic element' in any text, but belongs to its 'system'—the 'transformation of subject-matter in form, style and craftsmanship'. Both critics consequently adopt the language of intention and intrigue, referring to 'doubly-directed clues' and 'ambiguity-creating devices', and think of their own

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activity as a 'scientific inquiry'. Writer and critic share a mutual consciousness, the critic's task being to elucidate and codify those principles of organization deliberately employed by the author—and sometimes deliberately masked by him—where the principles themselves account not only for the structure of the text but also for the possible range of its meanings ('meanings' for Rimmon being thematic propositions). What's behind these critiques is the assumption that imaginative fiction is, or clearly ought to be, available to systematic commentary of a non-evaluative kind, though Rimmon's analysis goes further than Norrman's in reflecting a structuralist concern for 'impersonal laws and forms'. Such an assumption is attractive and fashionable, but it needs to be questioned, both because it spawns a particularly reductive kind of commentary, and because it may have the unconsidered effect of making the literary text itself too transparent and too limited in appeal. As James himself suggested when discussing the workings of allegory, 'when the machinery alone is visible . . . the end to which it operates becomes a matter of indifference'.

In their efforts to describe 'the techniques employed to create ambiguity' both these critics draw freely from linguistic, structuralist and formalist vocabularies. Both discuss at length *The Turn of the Screw* which for Norrman 'exhibits most of the ambiguity-creating devices . . . and is particularly rich in dismissed alternatives, structural over-elaborations of both plot and details, peculiar uses of logic, and equivocations'. Considering their common aims, however, there are marked differences in approach. Rimmon harnesses these diverse disciplines to produce a 'concept of ambiguity', and is concerned to detach that conception from others—double meaning, irony, vagueness—which have traditionally sought its shelter. Norrman's method is empirical, his research more open-ended, and he is prepared to allow into his discussion what both critics see as 'vague ambiguities'—those elements in the texts which are 'indistinct, obscure, not clearly defined'. As well as his analysis of carefully balanced thematic alternatives and equivocations he traces ambiguity in gesture, purely verbal misunderstanding, and in the repetition of common words, and indeed implies that

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'ambiguity-creating devices' proliferate in the texts. His formulations are clearly not intended to be exhaustive, and in fact his range of reference—the only other work he studies in any detail is *In the Cage*—is particularly narrow.

One of the weaknesses of this book lies in its refusal or failure to link its discrete perceptions of the 'devices' it describes to larger ends. Despite the trappings of a 'scientific' enquiry and the use of fashionable technical phrases it appears, on occasions, little more than a thoroughly conventional catalogue of textual ambiguities. The linguistic and structuralist theories it invokes flesh out the analysis considerably but at the same time remain peripheral, like the received ideas they undoubtedly are. What's missing is anything that amounts to an actual argument. The individual studies of *In the Cage* and *The Turn of the Screw* reveal this lack of direction. Norrman locates the ambiguities competently by paraphrasing the plots, but as he eschews any interest in the 'mimetic elements' of the stories his subsequent analysis inevitably lacks content. A number of light-weight generalizations about James himself, some of which are more true than others but all of which appear incidental, are no substitute. We are told, for example, that James is concerned to explore 'the blend of positive and negative values inherent in the romantic imagination' and that the 'moral' of *In the Cage* is that 'Winged wit may lead you astray, and it may become impossible to live in a world of one's own'. At the level of plot this is accurate enough but then James, like Browning (a real influence behind the stories), is less interested in 'the external machinery of incidents' than in the psychological effects of such machinery. What's behind this great story, as he informs us explicitly in the preface, is his 'immoral' interest in the 'nature of a mind', and although James undoubtedly took great delight in the resources of his own imagination and craft it's this willingness to engage his art with the lives of other people which is important. Norrman fails to detect this and it leads to his eccentric, and revealing, statement that 'For James, as a member of the class that received change without ever having to give it, there was a titillating luxury in indulging a fancy of speculation about the picture he must make to one such a one as the girl in the telegraph cage'. This suggestion, by linking James with the

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bored and feckless aristocrats who people the story itself, trivialises his art. What we're left with is the patronising notion of a writer pre-occupied with his own skills, amusing himself—and therefore his audience—by the subtle turnings of his plots and the detached placing of ambiguities. An unforced admission emerges from the splintered, if detailed, explorations of method in this book that James has nothing worthwhile to say: an admission which comes, for example, when Norrman lumps together the endings of *In the Cage, The Ambassadors,* and *The Golden Bowl* because they all document a 'return to reality'. But the 'realities' in question, and the kinds of return, are radically different, and the differences are what matter. Of course such differences may ultimately have to do with precisely those 'mimetic elements' Norrman, with his concentration on 'system', prefers not to consider, yet his own discussion (which digresses occasionally on the inevitable topic of Life and Art in James's fiction) significantly fails to make that central distinction real and visible. The failure helps to account for the rather aimless, discursive nature of the whole book.

Rimmon's book is more cogent, more settled in its aims, and less innocent. Much of it is taken up with defining and illustrating a 'concept of ambiguity' as a formal, structural principle within literature. This definition is then applied to four 'exemplary' works by James: 'The Lesson of the Master', 'The Figure in the Carpet', *The Turn of the Screw,* and *The Sacred Fount*. According to Rimmon ambiguous works are those in which 'mutually exclusive meanings co-exist' but do not cancel one another out; they exist in unresolved equilibrium and (unlike allegorical meanings) at 'the level of narrative literality'. The ambiguous text invites a clear choice between propositional meanings whilst making any actual choice impossible; each available hypothesis remains exclusive although 'equally coherent, equally plenary and convincing'. The paradox is usually to be explained by means of a 'central informational gap'—the apparent refusal of the author to come clean and supply at some stage a 'truthful' interpretation. Instead the text reveals and supports mutually exclusive systems of clues—clues, which individually and collectively, on both a narrative and structural level, justify more than one hypothesis.

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The argument is sophisticated and well documented, particularly where Ms. Rimmon differentiates this idea of ambiguity from what she refers to as 'cognate phenomena' like double meaning, irony, and allegory. Ambiguity, for example, 'differs from double or multiple meaning in that its component alternatives cannot both be true, nor can they both be subsumed in a larger unit which they conjoin to create or in which they are reconciled'. Similarly, 'irony is incompatible with ambiguity because its drift is unequivocally implied by the discourse'. As for ambiguities which might arise from vagueness, Rimmon is unwilling to accept these into her argument since that depends on the writer's total apprehension of his effects. Ambiguities exist after the 'realization' of 'all the data of the text' and can thus be studied objectively; they exist at the impersonal level of method.

In her account of these four works, chosen because they show a progressive sophistication of technique, a new deliberate ingenuity, Rimmon marshals her 'data' in a suitably methodical way and with the sharp eye of a detective. In terms of her very prudently chosen texts the virtues of this approach become clear, and she is surely right (especially when it comes to 'The Figure in the Carpet') to attack those critics who prefer their own 'meanings' or solutions, to the strategically open-ended and unresolved 'meanings' of the text itself. She satisfactorily demonstrates how effectively this work, far from revealing itself through a simple, single proposition, effortlessly absorbs interpretations and keeps its optional meanings open to the end. After the 'realization' of all the data comes the other realization that 'we can conclude nothing definitive on the basis of the tale itself' so successfully ambiguous are all the narrative clues. What Rimmon implies is also true: that 'The Figure in the Carpet' depends on interpretation to keep it alive and that as a piece of detective fiction it 'prevents the reader from being merely a passive consumer and turns him into an active producer of the text'. This is, after all, in line with James's confessed intention to 'reinstate analytic appreciation'. At the same time it may be true that the procedure behind this story is less typical than Rimmon suggests and that its effects are more superficial than she is prepared to allow. The element of sheer hoax in

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'The Figure in the Carpet' (the writer who withholds his 'secret' is wittily and appropriately called Vereker) is something she totally misses, just as she fails to make the obvious point that the ambiguities depend on such hoary old literary tricks as a series of arbitrary deaths and an undisclosed secret. The 'machinery' is so close to the surface her that, where she locates and explains it, Rimmon's analysis offers no surprises, and the very success with which she applies her 'formula' doesn't so much justify the method as indicate the flat, two-dimensional character of the story itself. In the end it's made to appear as puzzling and just about as exciting as a proposition in geometry, and by taking it seriously this critic appears merely as the victim of her own method.

The real subject of this book is a critical method, not the short stories of Henry James. This is indeed implied by its title, and it helps to explain the pages of diagrams, the algebraic equations, and the many references to figures like Barthes and Todorov. Rimmon is not really concerned to explain why these stories are ambiguous, only with ambiguity as a technical device, and this leads her to suppose that the best, the most interesting works are those in which the author, by a careful deployment of such devices, keeps open the discourse between text and critic. What's missing from this account—and what finally makes it indifferent literary criticism—is the recognition that other and better ambiguous works like Kipling's 'Mrs Bathurst' or indeed *The Turn of the Screw* discover their uncertainties in the world of experience and event rather than through the clever, artful deceit of the writer. Defining, in this sense, is not describing, and though there may be a need for a clearer, sharper definition of ambiguity, such a definition should not replace the need for describing the nature of ambiguous experience as it does here. Although, therefore, Rimmon's book may have the incidental virtue of rehabilitating a useful but shop-soiled word, the approach through impersonal 'laws and forms' it advocates will not displace a more traditional kind of criticism if only because, for all its absence of method, such criticism can and does bring us closer to the depths and resources of imaginative fiction.

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MICHAEL HIRST

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NOT JUST NORTH OF BOSTON

The Collected Poems of Edward Thomas. Edited by R. GEORGE THOMAS. Clarendon Press, 1978; £15.

The first *Collected Poems* of Edward Thomas (1920) was reissued in 1928 and 1929. Reset by Faber in 1936, it was printed again in 1941, 44, 45, 49 and 51. Five more impressions have appeared since then, the last, besides a paperback selection made by R. S. Thomas, still available. From 1973 Edna Longley's student text (Collins) has offered all but six of the poems with critical notes and extensive quotations from the relevant pages of Thomas's prose. Granted that he is a fine poet, do we need yet another edition?

Apparently we do. For neither Faber nor Collins can be said to give us the poems as Thomas left them. Oxford, with all the panoply of scholarship (hence the price: a reasonable one these days) sets out to do that.

When Thomas was killed at the battle of Arras in April 1917 he had prepared less than half of his poems for publication, and had no opportunity to proof-read even these. Since the typescripts used to set up *Poems* (1917) and *Last Poems* (1918) have disappeared, the problems for a textual editor are not simple. Most of the poems exist in several versions, and to determine which comes closest to the poet's final intention is a tricky business.

Take two examples. 'Rain', in the Faber *Collected Poems*, ends:

> Like me who have no love which this wild rain
> Has not dissolved except the love of death,
> If love it be for what is perfect and
> Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

The new Oxford edition has:

> except the love of death,
> If love it be towards what is perfect and
> Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

The difference is not just one of rhythm, subtle and important though that is. It is a difference of relationship, a difference in the nature of the love for or 'towards' that death which cannot disappoint.

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The Oxford text of 'Rain' follows that of *Poems* (1917), which has more authority than the MS that apparently provided the Faber (and Collins) reading. If we regret the change of 'for' into 'towards', we have to recognise that Thomas almost certainly made it. With the closing lines of 'March' it is Faber and Collins which take over the first printed text, that of *Last Poems* (1918):

> Not till night had half its stars
> And never a cloud, was I aware of silence
> Stained with all that hour's songs, a silence
> Saying that Spring returns, perhaps tomorrow.

In the Oxford edition this has become:

> Not till night had half its stars
> And never a cloud, was I aware of silence
> Rich with all that riot of songs, a silence
> Saying that Spring returns, perhaps tomorrow.

Professor Thomas here follows the latest surviving typescript, on the ground that it embodies Thomas's last known corrections. But we cannot be certain that these are later than the lost typescript used to set up *Last Poems*; and 'stained', not recorded as a variant in the Oxford edition, is surely so much finer that we ought not to abandon it.

I cite this example as a rare occasion where it would be a pity if the Oxford text were to be taken as definitive. For the most part the edition is beyond cavil. Professor Thomas has consulted not only the MSS in public collections on both sides of the Atlantic but MSS and typescripts held in private hands. In all he proposes about fifty new readings. I exclude from this estimate changes in punctuation, though for 'Lights Out' and one or two other pieces these are significant. It is not only minor poems that look a little different. I have mentioned 'March' and 'Rain'. There are alterations also to the hitherto familiar texts of 'The Manor Farm', 'Parting', 'October', 'M.E.T.' (Professor Thomas's title for 'No One So Much As You') and 'As the Team's Head Brass'. Some of the changes sound odd at first. The great majority are clearly justified and, with a few exceptions, clearly improvements.

Professor Thomas prints revised versions of 'A Tale' and 'Sedge-Warblers'; early drafts of a dozen poems, with the

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prose sketches on which 'Up In The Wind' and 'Old Man' were based; prose and verse extracts from an early journal; and the war diary (January/April 1917) which has hitherto been available only in a limited edition or in the pages of the *Anglo-Welsh Review*. His notes include passages from Thomas's notebooks and letters, without duplicating Edna Longley's very useful commentary.

The poems are printed in the order in which they were written. This seems sensible. The Faber order, though not entirely random, is largely so after the first sixty-four poems which Thomas had arranged himself. Mrs. Longley's edition made available the *Poems* and *Last Poems* in chronological order. She was restricted, however, perhaps by copyright difficulties, to the contents of these two volumes, so that her text omits the poems for Thomas's father and mother ('P.H.T.', 'No One So Much As You') as well as his first poem, 'Up In The Wind', and three others. In the Oxford edition we can start where Thomas started and follow those astonishingly creative two years through to the last poem, written in his diary a fortnight before he sailed for France.

Chronological arrangement makes clear how quickly Thomas found himself in verse. Nearly every characteristic of his work can be discerned in the first half dozen poems. The themes are already his: the divided self, the quest for integration, memory, the mind's delight and pain in a world where it finds itself a stranger. The exact, discriminating perception is here, with the intimate relation between perception and feeling; the tentative yet tenacious syntax; the rhythms, quiet and varied, of considered speech. Here too already are his major images: light and darkness, wind, rain, inn and forest, the journey, earth and sky. Six months later, sending some lines to Robert Frost, Thomas asked 'Are they *north* of Boston only?' The poem ('Fifty Faggots') has one turn of phrase that might remind us of Frost, and of course there are echoes elsewhere in Thomas's work. *North of Boston* had delighted him by its humanity, its realism and colloquial strength. In the summer and autumn of 1914 Frost's friendship was invaluable, and when Thomas, sending him a first batch of poems, wrote 'you are the only begetter right enough' he was not exaggerating. But the debt was more for encouragement and understanding than for example or advice.

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Frost himself, in a modest disclaimer of any serious influence on Thomas, recorded some years later that he had made one suggestion: 'I referred him to paragraphs in his book *In Pursuit of Spring* and told him to write it in verse form in exactly the same cadence'. This is not what Thomas did. To be sure, many of his poems are anticipated in his essays or (for want of a better word) topographical books. Of his first few poems, in particular, 'March' and 'The Other' recall *In Pursuit of Spring*. But in both, as in other poems that seem to draw on earlier material, what happened is not that Thomas simply reworked his prose, but that he re-imagined the feelings that had found their first, diffuse expression there. A high proportion of his poems take their origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity, and his experience of composition was evidently similar to Wordsworth's: 'the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind'.

'Old Man' is one of two poems—the other is 'Up In The Wind'—where Thomas can be seen as keeping fairly closely to a prose draft. Yet 'Old Man' too has been shaped by emotion reawakened in the mind. Its evolution from the prose sketch 'Old Man's Beard' has been examined by William Cooke; but the feelings explored go back, as the poem suggests, a great deal earlier. George Thomas's notes, supplemented by Mrs. Longley's, allow us to trace their growth from an incident in Thomas's boyhood. The original apprehension is first recalled nearly thirty years later (*The South Country*, finished in the autumn of 1908), then fictionalised in an unpublished short story (August 1909) as Thomas tries to understand it. Revived in the garden at Steep, where the four-year-old Myfanwy would remind him of his own childhood, the experience drifts into focus again in a notebook entry of November 1914: '*Old Man* scent, I smell again and again not really liking it but venerating it because it holds the secret of something of very long ago which I feel it may someday recall, but I have got no idea what'. Six days later the prose sketch was written, and three weeks after that the poem—two drafts before the final text, so much more

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sombre and evocative at its close than even the second draft (which read 'Only an avenue dark without end or name').

As for Frost's example, though Thomas rightly praised it, the recovery of the tones of living speech for poetry was so general an aim around 1910 as to be distinctive of the whole period. Aside from the partial success of Imagists and Georgians, we meet it in Eliot and Yeats (*Responsibilities*), as we read calls for it, or tributes to it, in Pound's articles and reviews for *Poetry* in the years 1913/14. Thomas admired and learned from Frost, but even in blank verse, where the pull of Frost's achievement was strongest, his accent is his own. Differences between English and American idiom, in the tone and run of the sentence, go along with a difference in temperament between the two men. Thomas is a solitary, subjective writer. Frost feels more at home in the world, more sure of himself, more ready to generalise. So his rhythms are slightly more emphatic, his syntax less elusive.

Probably the quietness of Thomas's rhythms derives partly from his years of writing prose. If we come to him from reading a more musical poet—from Eliot, say—we may have the impression that what we are listening to is hardly verse at all. Yet the words are precise, the stresses more significant than they would be in prose. And the rhythms, paradoxically, are often closer to the rhythms of speech, responding to the turns and checks of mood, refusing to oversimplify. Especially Thomas has a gift for using the pause which the voice makes naturally at the end of a line to capture feelings that elude definition in words: feelings of expectation, of indecision or perplexity. Often there is a delicate interplay between feeling and observation, or a swaying back and forward of the mind between present, past and future. De la Mare speaks of him in a perceptive, though at first rather puzzling phrase, as 'doubly homesick, for this and for another world'. Homesick for this world because Thomas was so acutely conscious. To be conscious, as Eliot tells us, is not to be in time; and so although he loves the streams and woods, Thomas can never feel at home there. Homesick, too, for another world, because he has intimations of a world beyond time, though he knows that he can never reach that world and that perhaps it doesn't exist.

A poet as subtle as this deserves an edition as good as

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scholarship can make it, and Professor Thomas has put us all in his debt. What we need now is a plain text, both in cloth and paperback, of the poems. It would be pleasant to hear that Oxford already have such a text in hand.

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TRILLING AND CAPABILITY

Lionel Trilling: Negative Capability and the Wisdom of Avoidance. By ROBERT BOYERS. University of Missouri Press, 1977; £4.50.

Criticism has to strike a balance between blind deference to its subject's self-assertion—'every Scripture', as Emerson proposed, being interpreted 'by the same spirit which gave it forth'—and the de-naturing of tone and intention so characteristic of Marxist criticism, in which art is under suspicion of *mauvaise foi* and must be regarded constantly as a series of active tricks and passive traps.

Robert Boyers's monograph on Lionel Trilling attempts to steer between the whirlpool of naiveté and the rocks of cynicism, but is fairly sucked into the water. Its manner is courtly and measured, detached and yet respectful—

> Perhaps there is more of the 'triumphal arch' and of the 'commemorative icon' in Trilling's work than he would have liked to think: and perhaps therefore one cannot afford to be quite so aggressive in attacking his version of wisdom as he would have wished. Perhaps what we can do, in thinking of Trilling's work, is to grant it—in Trilling's words—'the complex fullness of its appropriate life'.

This is Boyers's conclusion and he never conceals his fundamental concurrence with the ethical direction of Trilling's work. Any qualifications or demurrals he makes are subsumed by his sense of Trilling's 'personal decency and urbanely companionable gentleness'. This can become a little pompous, and Boyers at times effuses a reverence which has nothing to do with criticism. He is too polite about the inadequacies in Trilling's work, which he can nonetheless perceive

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very clearly. The essay sometimes reads as though its author was worried that he might get his head chopped off—not that the courts of critical judgment in America are noted for their temperance and mercy, and not that Trilling is not a sensitive issue in American intellectual life.

Trilling's death in 1975 both sanctified his status and, for another section of opinion, confirmed his superfluity. Columbia University, his life-long alma mater, has Trilling seminars, prizes and memorial lectures; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich are honouring him—uniquely, I believe, for a modern English-speaking critic—with a definitive collected edition, to be published over the next few years; the wisdom of Trilling is still quoted throughout New York in every likely and unlikely context. On the other hand, there is Alfred Kazin who, in his new memoir *New York Jew*, cuttingly proffered a few of Trilling's off-duty lapses; and Boyers makes a coy reference to 'a mean and envious fellow' who complained in print that it never 'occurs to Trilling that we may not want to know what is on his mind'. The fellow is right; there was a presumption which irritated, and which at least partially explains the sophomore iconoclasm directed against Trilling since the publication of *Beyond Culture* in 1965.

Yet there is more at stake—the parallel with Leavis is unavoidable—than an individual's hagiography. Trilling represents the survival in criticism of what Boyers calls

> a unified sensibility whose general absence our culture has persistently bemoaned . . . it is perhaps most appropriate to think of Trilling as having enlarged the possibilities of literary criticism to accommodate almost any subject.

This enlargement was not Trilling's achievement—it is a scope native to the notion of culture, particularly as conceived in America, where literary criticism has always been,as Kazin once put it, 'the lay philosophy, the intellectual carry-all'. In this respect Trilling is emphatically not comparable to Leavis, and Boyers can tell us exactly why, without questioning his procedure:

> Trilling was a man bent on getting at the significance of things, and in this was perfectly willing to yield a little by

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way of particularity if he might thereby discover the symptomatic status of the recalcitrant object.

It could be argued that Leavis made alarmingly ill-informed social judgments from his own observation, but he was never Hegelian in outlook; whereas Trilling's Hegelianism is perhaps the weakest aspect of his criticism, because it is so essentially half-hearted. From what stands or falls by its success as a system, he selects only charming isolated moments, abandoning the metaphysical totality as a sediment. (And Joseph Frank long ago pointed out, in *The Widening Gyre*, how Trilling's Hegel is not just reach-me-down, but often wrong in terms of basic comprehension.) What matters to Trilling in Hegel is the prominence given to the simultaneity of dialectic contradiction, the dominating interest in historicism and ideology, and the belief in the ultimate coherence of relations within each moment of culture. These elements not only pervade, but actually validate the development of literary criticism in which Trilling stands. It is easy to see how a discourse thinking itself 'capable of accommodating almost any subject' could evolve from them, and it is also easy to see how appropriately democratic that principle is. Ordinary participation in society fits a man to judge all matters of state, just as the critic's common intelligence—finely representative but not expert— fits him to judge all matters of culture. At its worst, such an attitude to criticism is self-important, as evinced by the portentous titles which the East Coast intellectuals give their collections of occasional and quarterly journalism: *Beyond Culture, Styles of Radical Will, An End to Innocence, The Decline of the New, Gates of Eden*. All such phrases bespeak a high confidence in the use of some very complex categories of thought. If the books in question never present the heralded grand synthesis, then their brief commentaries are at least implicitly passages through it, although their substance may be personal to the point of eccentricity. At its best, as in Trilling's great essay on the Kinsey Report, the form of cultural criticism allows a man to address his situation at its most sensitive and inaccessible point. Against Kinsey and the culture of sociology, Trilling brought the whole force of the culture of literature—it is a heroic confrontation.

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Zeal for the idea of speaking to the culture in the jargon-free language of democracy has declined since the war. The visible actuality of technocracy and the consequent necessity for an expert discourse have destroyed it. This was an issue on which Trilling was painfully self-conscious, and he suffered from uncertainty as to where he should aim his writing. He envied the Victorian social critics their feeling that 'England, however deranged, could still be talked to', but his own resort, given the multiplicity of America, was to the uneasy device of the pronoun 'we', used to establish a community of those living under the peculiarly modern dispensation of culture. In the 'sixties, many people came to resent vociferously the assumption that they were included in what had come to seem such a limited sensibility, and in the preface to *Beyond Culture*, Trilling cannily justified the usage by apologising for it.

If Trilling was antipathetic to a generation seeking out apocalypse, he remained a focusing symbol of moral possibility for the conservative opposition, and the last ten years or so have seen a major revival of Trilling's manner, a revival to which Boyers's essay belongs. The genre brings forth judgments of culture and morality characteristically Freudian rather than Arnoldian, and allows itself a mandarin vocabulary and methodology of interpretation, the 'we' being replaced by something posing as more scientific. Exemplary of this are Philip Rieff's *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, Quentin Anderson's *The Imperial Self* and Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence*—all books in which one can unscramble Trilling's tutelary presence—and, as if reciprocally, that latter-day *universals-geschichte*, Trilling's own *Sincerity and Authenticity*. These books, along with others including the one under review, defend a patriarchal humanism against the encroachments of liberalism in the form, which Trilling, referring to the barbarism of 1968, called 'Modernism in the streets'.

Boyers stands on the foothills. He is not as grandiloquent or sacerdotal as Anderson or Bloom, and he writes a lucid, shapely, even pretty prose. His intentions as critic are stated with refreshing modesty—'the object of this study is to work through the most important of those ideas to which Trilling was inexorably attracted in a way that will be generally

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helpful'—and he receives very strongly Trilling's scepticism over the value of an exigent modernist morality, weighed against the claims of 'private material interest . . . dumb objects and the satisfaction one might take in them'; Boyers also brings out Trilling's crucial insistence that life must be accepted as a condition (sincerity), rather than raw material on which the self imposes demands (authenticity).

This constitutes the strongest feature of the book: what spoils it is Boyers's upgrading of Trilling's level of intellectual activity. He makes out a contentious scholasticism in texts which are glowing with patience, explanation, and the effort to distinguish and clarify. The difficulties, for example, which Boyers poses over the exact status of the short story *Of this time, Of that Place* seem to me redundant, even spurious. It is right to emphasise that it is the development of Howe, the liberal becoming imaginative, rather than the image of Tertan, which is the story's dynamic (compare the relation of Laskell and Maxim in *The Middle of the Journey*) but Boyers insists further that the story should be measured according to the canons of classical tragedy. He sees at one point that Trilling's was not a *theory* of tragedy, but an invocation of it implying certain moral tones which American culture lacked—

> Tragedy was for Trilling an idea with a particular resonance, valuable in itself for the stern and intractable demeanor it could bring to the consideration of issues otherwise frivolously engaged;

yet he then continues by judging the story according to pseudo-Aristotelian conceptions of catharsis, illumination, transfiguration etc. quite inappropriate to the story's formal organisation. When, inevitably, it fails this test, Boyers concludes with a full circle, admitting that 'we do not engage Trilling's story as we would a tragic text. We engage it in the spirit in which it is presented'—glaringly obvious, one would have thought, but precisely what Boyers has not done.

The second section of the book continues the theme of the relation of the liberal imagination to tragedy, but modulates smoothly into a discussion of 'negative capability'. Boyers uses Trilling's introduction to James's *The Princess Casamassima*, a novel which, as Boyers puts it, became for

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Trilling 'an emblem of several truths to which he was urged continually to bear witness'. The question of Trilling's very high evaluation of this work is not considered pertinent, and Boyers follows him in expropriating the 'symptomatic status' of certain moral situations which it contains. This was always Trilling's way as a critic; ultimately he valued a work of art for its power to yield up something spiritually practicable. Thus the critical issues become the Princess as the embodiment of the disordered will of the liberal imagination, and Hyacinth's 'negative capability', which Trilling reads as a triumphant transcendence of the ideological, but which Boyers interprets as a failure of Will. It is an effective discussion, but only on its own narrow grounds. Neither Trilling nor Boyers is properly writing as a literary critic so much as a literary critic of culture, who regards the work of art only so far as it is usefully illustrative of culture. If one chooses to accept this premiss, it is no use complaining that the novel in question is not being seen at all.

The third text which Boyers employs is Trilling's short story *The Other Margaret*, and it is here alone that Boyers succeeds in being 'generally helpful'. It is, he suggests, a parable of wisdom, concerned with 'the bottom line, that which each is given to know—and how we come truly to possess it'. The story responds well to this approach, as Boyers enters into melancholy dialogue with Trilling—'If guilt is to be our portion for a general failure to act, let it be a moderate guilt, diffuse and partial, rather than an awful guilt, suffered on behalf of what has been done'. This tone may sound self-dramatising, but it can only be fashionable to deplore its dignity.

Finally, Boyers's essay is not an attempt to analyse or criticise Trilling, and the stated intention of being 'generally helpful' is not fulfilled. (For one thing, the three texts on which Boyers concentrates are not fairly representative of Trilling's range.) What we are given is Boyers superimposing his own image on Trilling's, and refocusing the result. One may admire the gravity of the tribute, but the interesting work on Trilling will be less narcissistic, less complicit.

And Trilling's is an interesting history. He was not an original thinker, nor a first-rate writer of fiction. But in one of his own favourite expressions, he was a 'figure', with the

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intellectual personality of the humanist, the pedagogue who teaches the texts of classical literature in order to inculcate respect for morality, virtue and culture. Like many humanists, Trilling became a victim of nostalgia. He preferred an archaic Republican idiom, as one can see from the insertion of a little piece on Tacitus in the middle of *The Liberal Imagination*, or from the way in which he formulated his repulsion from R. D. Laing at the end of *Sincerity and Authenticity*. Machiavelli retreated to his study every evening to consort with his true friends, the ancient authors. Trilling longed for a world of heroes, of strong selves honoured in the 'fair courts of life', yet he drove himself out, like Machiavelli, into ideologies, relativities and ambiguities. It is pleasant to praise him as Boyers's monograph does, especially because he was a writer who managed to modify his thought without prostituting it, but there is an obscured history behind 'his investment in moral issues . . . his love of beautiful words and generous sentiments' which Boyers's courtesies do not reveal. The real complexity lies in the contexts of Trilling's writings—the modus operandi of literary life in New York; the Germanic influence on nineteenth-century American thought, and the reaction against it, in liberalism and pragmatism; the role of the freelance intellectual in American politics, especially in relation to Soviet Russia and domestic Communism; the manipulation or co-operation of those intellectuals by or with the state, as part of a programme of anti-Communist propaganda; the intellectuals' response to the political organisation of the students in the nineteen-sixties; the relation between the interpretation of culture and the interpretation of literary texts; the methods of Humanities teaching at Columbia. It is through these closer perspectives that Trilling's work will emerge in its true dimensions.

RUPERT CHRISTIANSEN

King's College
Cambridge

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F. W. Bateson Memorial Lecture

IT IS PROPOSED that a lecture should be given annually in Oxford in memory of F. W. Bateson if sufficient funds are forthcoming to endow it. The lecture would be given at his own college through the hospitality of the President and Fellows of Corpus Christi, and it would subsequently be printed in *Essays in Criticism* so that it may be available to a wider audience. Corpus Christi College has kindly agreed to administer the lectureship fund of which the undersigned have undertaken to be trustees.

We very much hope that those readers of *E in C* throughout the world who have valued F. W. Bateson's work will feel that the lecture would be an appropriate way both of honouring him and of contributing further to the subject to which he devoted his life. Donations, large or small, should be sent to

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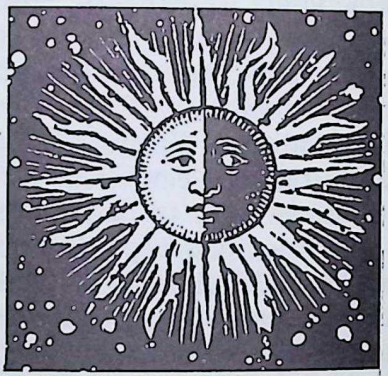

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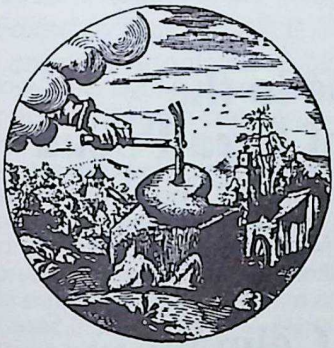

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